



DONEGAL REMOTE WORKING STRATEGY FOR BUSINESS



Comhairle Contae
Dhún na nGall
Donegal County Council



DONEGAL

IT'S IN OUR DNA



“

Promote Donegal
nationally and internationally
as an ideal and superb location
for remote workers

”

FOREWORD



Rena Donaghey

Cllr. Rena Donaghey
Cathaoirleach

We are living in extraordinary times. Notwithstanding the challenges posed by Covid-19, climate change and Brexit, this is a time of great opportunity for Donegal, its communities, businesses and people.

We have made significant advancements since the launch of the Donegal Local Economic & Community Plan in 2015 in promoting entrepreneurship, investment and enterprise. The delivery of a number of significant infrastructure investments across our towns and villages will further build on our capacity to facilitate remote working including the Inishowen Innovation Hub and the Alpha Innovation Centre in Letterkenny.

Under the Donegal Digital Action Plan, we are accelerating our digital readiness by exploring smart technologies, building digital communities, digital clusters and increasing digital innovations around the county. The digital transformation, accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic, has transformed our ways of working and highlighted the effectiveness of remote working for businesses.

These emerging trends have placed a renewed focus on sustainable rural communities and have presented unprecedented opportunity for locations such as Donegal with a competitive cost base, a talented workforce and an unmatched quality of life.

This Remote Working for Business strategy sets out a range of targeted initiatives aimed at positioning Donegal as a world class destination of choice, on the island of Ireland, for remote workers and businesses. This strategy is a reflection of our desire to transform Donegal's economic landscape, support the development of sustainable communities, harness innovation and fulfill our vision of Donegal as the destination of choice to live, work, visit and do business in, in Ireland.



John G. McLaughlin

John G. McLaughlin
Chief Executive



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1. INTRODUCTION

The recent global pandemic has resulted in huge changes in the way people live and work and this has been driven primarily by the need to find new and safe ways to operate on a daily basis. While the concept of remote working is not a new one, Covid-19 has catapulted the concept into the everyday vocabulary as employers and employees explore new and flexible solutions which are now proving beneficial not only for employees, but also for employers and for communities in towns and villages across the country.

Covid 19 has provided an opportunity to test the concept of 'remote working' and it is proving to be an effective solution that not only protects people during a pandemic but is also a more climate resilient alternative that benefits a more balanced approach to regional development.

The increase of remote working provides an opportunity for the sustainable regeneration of our towns and villages to accommodate quality employment and residential and social infrastructure to meet the growth

ambitions of the county in a robust way that can have long term positive impacts on the community. The 'sense of place' in Donegal is more than an idyll. If sustained growth is to be achieved the deprivations and social inequalities that have shaped many areas of the County need continued multi-agency collaboration and a renewed 'sense of place'.

The Governments recently launched National Remote Work Strategy 'Making Remote Work' aims to build on the recent experiences of remote working to ensure that it becomes a permanent feature in the Irish workplace in a way that maximises economic, social and environmental benefits.

Locations such as Donegal have already benefitted from this shift towards remote working with people either returning to Donegal or choosing Donegal as a destination to work remotely from, demonstrating that these locations have a unique offering for those who seek to balance an excellent quality of life with the desire for a productive and progressive career.





The Remote Working Strategy for Donegal aims to promote Donegal nationally and internationally as an ideal and superb location for remote workers by emphasizing the wide range of alternative work spaces available throughout the County, the supports available to remote workers in the County, the talent pool which exists here and the infrastructure and connectivity available across the county.

As agile work practices continue to grow globally, many international business leaders are recognising that remote working could help to alleviate a variety of business challenges such as talent deficits, the fluctuating cost of real estate and environmental concerns.

Donegal County Council has prepared this strategy framework to enable Donegal to avail of these emerging opportunities. This strategy is aligned with the various programmes of activity currently being led by the Council including initiatives such as Donegal Digital, the ambitious town and village regeneration programme, assistance with the rollout of the National Broadband Programme (NBP), development of a range of co-

working spaces and other economic development activity as well as key infrastructural projects such as the development of the road network, water and waste water provision, planning development and control, housing provision, environmental activity and the provision of outdoor recreational facilities. With a superb quality of life, a low cost of living, open spaces, excellent connectivity, a talented workforce and a range of digital working hubs, Donegal is well placed to reap the benefits of remote working in an increasingly digitalised world.

As part of this strategy making process, an extensive public consultation process was held with 48 responses received from individuals, organizations and other interested stakeholders. The input from this process has informed the scope, direction and intent of this strategic framework.

Maximising the opportunities presented by remote working forms an important part of a blended approach to achieving economic growth and resilience in Donegal and in a regional context.

2. POLICY CONTEXT

Attracting and retaining talent, enhancing innovation capability, entrepreneurship and sustaining inward investment are key drivers for the growth and prosperity of the county and positioning Donegal as a location of choice for remote working will play a central role in achieving these ambitions.

Consideration has been given to the broader policy landscape at EU, national, regional and local levels with a focus on how this framework contributes to and supports the achievement of these policies.

The 2002 European Framework Agreement on Teleworking focuses on a number of key areas including working conditions, data protection, privacy, equipment, health & safety, training and the collective rights of workers. Telework is now better known as remote working and has become more prevalent across Europe.

Project Ireland 2040 encompasses the National Planning Framework and National Development Plan 2018 to 2027 and presents the government's long-term overarching strategy to make Ireland a better country for all of its people. It sets out ten National Strategic Outcomes and remote working has the potential to impact positively on many of these strategic outcomes including enhanced regional development, strengthening rural economies and communities, a strong economy and transitioning to the low carbon and climate resilient society.

At the same time the delivery of other strategic outcomes such as Enhanced Regional Accessibility; Sustainable Mobility; High Quality International Connectivity; Enhanced Amenity and Heritage; and

Access to Quality Childcare, Education and Health Services will benefit remote working opportunities in areas such as Donegal.

Future Jobs Ireland sets out a new economic pathway for Ireland that will drive our development as a resilient, innovative, and globally connected economy, capable of coping with technological and other transformational changes ahead. The need to embrace flexible working solutions such as remote working has been identified as a key enabler in the strategy.

A key deliverable of Future Jobs Ireland has been the publication of the Remote Work in Ireland Report in December 2019. This report considered the prevalence and types of remote working solutions in Ireland, the attitudes towards them and influencing factors for employees and employers when engaging with these solutions. This report found a need for national guidance for employers seeking to engage with remote working solutions. The need for this guidance intensified with the onset of the Covid pandemic in 2020 and following an extensive public consultation process 'Guidance on Remote Working' was published by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation.

This work has informed the recently launched National Remote Work Strategy 'Making Remote Work' which sets out the Government's commitment to facilitating increased remote work adoption in a way that reaps the many benefits and mitigates potential negative side-effects by removing barriers, developing infrastructure, providing guidance, raising awareness and leading by example.

The Climate Action Plan 2019 sets out an ambitious course of action over the coming years to address the adverse impact that climate disruption is having on Ireland's environment, society, economic and natural resources. This framework is cognisant of the potential



impact that remote working will have on enabling Ireland to achieve its climate adaptation ambitions.

The Northern and Western Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (NW RSES) provides for the careful management and encouragement of development within rural areas, including Donegal, to ensure that these areas remain and grow as vibrant communities. It supports the implementation of the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the relevant economic policies and objectives of Government in the region.

Likewise the *County Donegal Development Plan 2018 – 2024*, a land-use policy framework, sets out specific priorities and ambitions for growth at a county level supporting the implementation of the NPF and the NW RSES. This Remote Working Strategy Framework will have a strong focus on retaining and attracting talent to Donegal contributing positively to the explicit population growth ambitions of these plans.

In line with this, the *Donegal Local Economic and Community Plan 2016 – 2022* aims to connect Donegal's people and places to harness its economic opportunities to achieve strong, healthy, inclusive and sustainable communities. 'Donegal Digital' is a key initiative of this plan, one that sees a partnership of organizations, companies and institutions across Donegal driving digital

transformation so as to co-build sustainable enterprises and societal services. This strategy will further contribute to and avail of the opportunities presented through Donegal Digital.

The AEC (Atlantic Economic Corridor) Hubs Network Initiative is coordinated by the Western Development Commission (WDC) and is aimed at creating a community network comprising of approximately 114 hubs playing a vital role in the growing trend towards remote working as a means of attracting workers back to rural locations. The project will help create an ecosystem from the existing 114 hubs identified in the AEC Region and will promote, market and showcase the profile of the hubs within the communities they are located and beyond. Key deliverables of this project include providing a Hub website platform, online automated booking engine and Hub management system.

NUI Galway Whitaker Institute and the WDC undertook two national surveys in Ireland in 2020 ([Phase 1](#) and [Phase 2](#)) and one in 2021 ([Phase 3](#)). Phase 2 was carried out in order to gather data on remote working experiences during Covid 19. Phase 3 results indicated 95% of workers were in favor of working remotely on an on-going basis. The findings from this survey have helped inform this strategy framework.



3. WHAT IS REMOTE WORKING?

The 2002 European Framework Agreement defines telework as “a form of organising and/or performing work, using information technology, in the context of an employment contract/ relationship, where work, which could also be performed at the employers premises, is carried out away from those premises on a regular basis”.

The term remote working can encompass various flexible ways of working and feedback from the public consultation process undertaken in the development of this strategy shows that remote working means different things to different people with the most prevalent ways of working at this time being:

- Working from home.
- Working close to home with little or no commute, for example working from a digital hub.
- Working from anywhere.
- Working outside of your employers' main place of business or the traditional office environment.
- A blend of working from both the traditional office environment and a remote location.
- A mutual agreement with your employer to undertake work away from the main place of business.



4. WHY A REMOTE WORKING STRATEGY?

The Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation found in their 'Remote Work in Ireland' research paper in 2019 that remote working has a broad and significant impact on regional economies with the potential to increase labour force participation, improve productivity, attract and retain talent and assist in the transition to a low carbon economy.

Globally, the demand for flexible working solutions is expected to continue to grow as companies strive to secure a competitive edge or advantage within their sectors and enhance their ability to respond to ongoing changes such as technological advancements, changing consumer demands, the Covid pandemic, Brexit and the transition to a low carbon society. These changes are leading to more and more businesses embracing flexible working models, allowing employees to work from anywhere as a means to cut costs and most importantly to access talent.

Talent availability is a key challenge for many global business leaders who are looking to remote working as a solution to access talent and skills. A recent study by PWC found that 84% of Irish CEO's identified the

availability of key skills as a top business threat. As well as that, a global talent survey by LinkedIn also revealed that 72% of talent professionals agree that remote working will be key to future recruitment.

Multinational companies such as Facebook, Twitter, Microsoft, Amazon and Google have all recently announced long term plans to shift employees remotely. Gartner, a leading research and advisory company, published a survey revealing that 74% of global business leaders expect to transition a number of their previously on-site workforce to permanently remote positions post COVID-19.

This shift in work practices offers locations such as Donegal opportunities to position as primary locations of choice for remote working, responding proactively to the growing interest among the diaspora, businesses and digital nomads to relocate to regions where they can enjoy multiple benefits including an excellent quality of life and a lower cost of living. This Remote Working Strategy sets out the Council's intent to avail of the opportunities presenting and to position Donegal as a location of choice for remote working.

5. THE DONEGAL OFFERING

Donegal offers a real and meaningful alternative to city life, offering a superb quality of life with fresh air, open spaces and vibrant communities with excellent infrastructure including high speed broadband connectivity and other flexible working solutions such as a growing network of digital remote working hubs.

5.1 QUALITY OF LIFE

Quality of life was identified, in the public consultation process, as a key strength and influencing factor for people when choosing to live and work in Donegal.

- Excellent outdoor experiences with rugged landscapes, an extensive coastline with many blue flag beaches, stunning scenery, mountain trails and picturesque towns and villages.
- Appeals to those that want to experience outdoor living in a tranquil environment, while at the same time having entertainment, shopping and other commercial amenities in vibrant towns and villages.
- Renowned for its friendly people, strong community spirit and close communities where people feel safe and where there is a healthy pace of life.
- Donegal's unique culture and heritage are strong pull factors.
- Less commuting and less traffic congestion means more quality family time and work life balance.
- Cost of living is much less than in many other areas of Ireland resulting in higher levels of disposable income.
- More affordable quality childcare options.

- Good educational and learning opportunities from pre-school through to primary, post- primary and third level along with a wide range of training and skills development offerings.

While Donegal offers an excellent quality of life, the need to assist and support workers and their families in transitioning to life in Donegal was identified as a key challenge. This is something that this strategy aims to address through the provision of a range of supports and opportunities for networking.

5.2 GROWING ECONOMY

Donegal's growing economy and its emergence as a competitive and innovative place is a key attractor for remote workers and for employers seeking talent.

- Home to leading international companies along with a flourishing SME business sector.
- Growing ICT /FinTech cluster with a highly skilled pool of talent and strong focus on continued workforce development opportunities.
- Proactive collaboration between Further Education and Training (FET) providers such as Donegal Education and Training Board (ETB), Third Level institutes and industry including supporting the workforce development ambitions of industry such as the Donegal ICT/FinTech cluster.
- Donegal's location as part of the North West City region presents a unique and strategic business proposition providing a cross- border gateway to both the UK and EU markets.





- Ireland is the only EU country with English as a first language appealing to those who wish to relocate from other English speaking countries such as the USA.
- Supportive business environment with various programmes offered from a range of organizations including IDA, Enterprise Ireland, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Local Enterprise Office and Donegal County Council.
- Growing Innovation and Research & Development capability including through the focused Donegal Digital initiative.

Donegal's peripheral location continues to present challenges with the perception that the county is far removed from some of the main city locations on the island with long journey times, inadequate road, rail and air access identified as some key issues for those considering Donegal as a remote working location.

5.3 DIGITALLY CONNECTED

Significant progress has been made in recent years in relation to ensuring wider access to high speed broadband networks across Donegal.

- Donegal is strategically located on the modern Trans Atlantic fibre cable from Halifax in Nova Scotia North America through the CoLocation centre in Letterkenny. This is the first point of presence in the EU for this (Trans Atlantic) traffic. The initiative

provides local and global commerce opportunities between the island of Ireland and the rest of the world, offering local and global businesses access to secure, ultra-low latency capacity.

- Donegal has 4 gigabit enabled towns and 8 commercial grade Metropolitan Area Networks (MANs) in Carndonagh, Buncrana, Letterkenny, Ballybofey/Stranorlar, Donegal Town, Ballyshannon, Bundoran & Gaoth Dobhair Industrial Estate. These are Gigabit fibre rings with available dark fibre, offering additional security and resilience to the commercial and public service sector consumers.
- Of the approximate 100,000 premises in Donegal, 66% have potential access to commercial High Speed Broadband (HSB defined as consistent 30mbps download) and it is estimated that 25,000 of these premises are passed by Rural Gigabit Fibre networks.¹
- The remaining 34% of premises will be connected by Fibre broadband as part of the National Broadband Plan.
- Most towns and villages in the county have fibre to the cabinet services which can deliver speeds up to 100mbps across the existing copper wire networks. Speeds are dependent on network distance to the cabinet/exchange so services are generally defined as being available within a 1.5km of the enabled cabinet/exchange.



- OPENEIR have built a commercial open access rural fibre network bringing gigabit fibre broadband out to more rural premises. This network covers about 25,000 homes in Donegal.
- 56 WiFi zones are being rolled out in towns and villages across Donegal under the WiFi4EU scheme.
- 11 Broadband Connection Points at various local community buildings or public spaces are being rolled out.

In addition to the above, there is excellent mobile phone coverage in Donegal although limited coverage in certain parts of rural Donegal was identified as an issue by respondents to the public consultation process. The Commission for Communications Regulations (ComReg) provides a mobile coverage map at www.comreg.ie/coveragemap where consumers can check operators coverage and signals at locations in Donegal.

KEY CONNECTIVITY FACTORS FOR DONEGAL

7
COMMERCIAL GRADE
METROPOLITAN AREA
NETWORKS

4
GIGABIT
ENABLED
TOWNS

11
BROADBAND
CONNECTION
POINTS

SEVERAL
WIRELESS HIGH
SPEED BROADBAND
PROVIDERS

ALL DONEGAL
COUNTY COUNCIL
PUBLIC BUILDINGS
HAVE PUBLIC WIFI

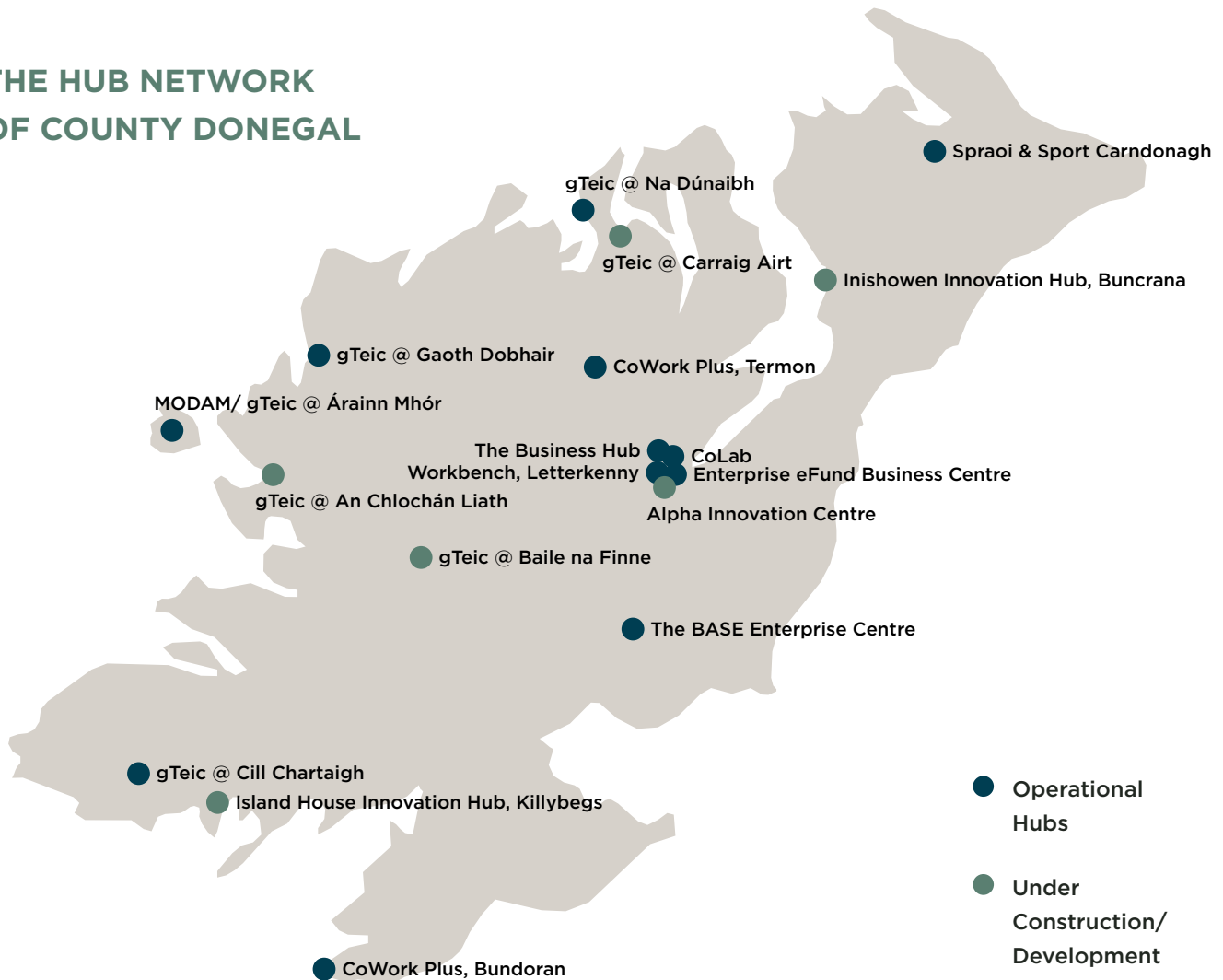
PUBLIC FREE WIFI
ZONES ARE BEING
CREATED IN 56 TOWNS
& VILLAGES

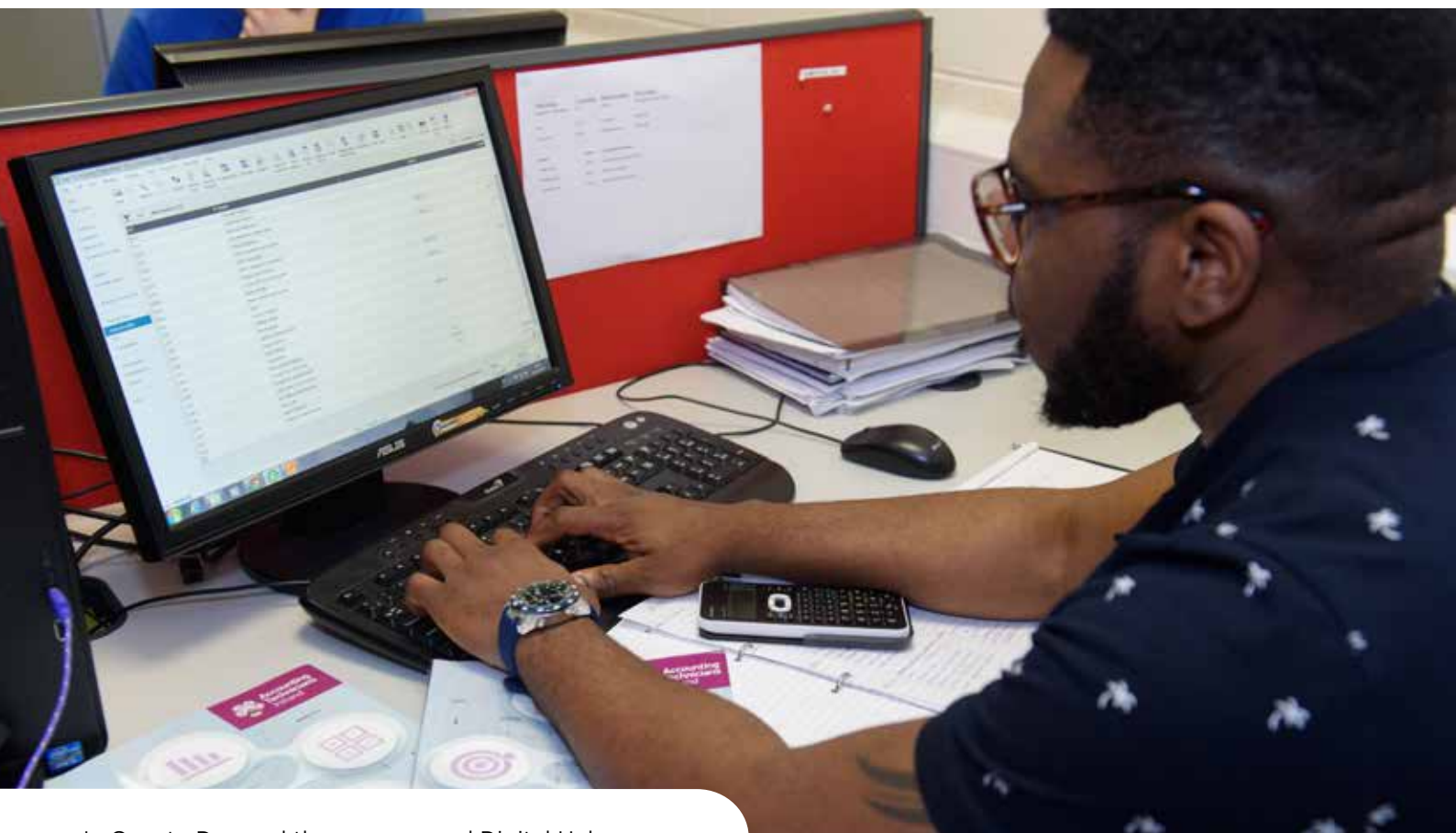
5.4 NETWORK OF DIGITAL HUBS

Donegal is well served with a range of Digital Hubs offering remote working opportunities in various locations across the county and this number is steadily increasing. These hubs form part of a broader network of

hubs located along with western seaboard and are part of the Atlantic Economic Corridor Hub network (<https://www.atlanticeconomiccorridor.ie/hubs-map/>)

THE HUB NETWORK OF COUNTY DONEGAL











In County Donegal there are several Digital Hubs currently in operation including:

-  The BASE Enterprise Centre, Stranorlar
-  CoLab, Letterkenny Institute of Technology
-  CoWork Plus Bundoran
-  Craoibhín Community Enterprise Centre, Termon
-  Gteic Cill Charthaigh
-  MODAM, Arranmore Island
-  Spraoi agus Sport, The Corn Mill, CoWork Plus, Carndonagh
-  Gteic Gaoth Dobhair
-  Workbench, Bank of Ireland, Letterkenny
-  The Business Hub, Letterkenny

The need for additional remote working space has been identified in the public consultation process and there are several digital hubs at varying stages of development including:

-  Alpha Innovation Centre, Letterkenny
-  Inishowen Innovation Hub, Buncrana
-  Island House Innovation Hub, Killybegs
-  Carrigart Digital Hub
-  Dungloe
-  Tory Island

There are opportunities to explore more flexible options for the provision of co-working space in various towns and villages across the county. For example, there are plans to explore the opportunity of providing co-working space in community facilities as part of the roll out of the Broadband Connection Points under the NBP, and businesses with office capacity are also interested in providing co-working solutions. Enterprise Ireland

Innovation-as-a-Service (IaaS) project aims to increase levels of competitiveness and innovation in SMEs across Border Regions, by increasing their use of disruptive technologies (including Industry 4.0) in manufacturing operations through the growing network of digital innovation hubs, and promoting their link with academia.

5.5 TALENT

Donegal has a highly skilled and educated workforce with businesses experiencing high levels of staff retention and loyalty.

- Many businesses, both large and small, cite staff loyalty and retention of highly skilled and experienced staff as one of the key influencing factors for locating and growing their business in Donegal.
- Talent and skill levels are high in Donegal and are supported by educational bodies such as Letterkenny Institute of Technology (LYIT) and Donegal Education and Training Board (ETB) who

work closely with the private sector to ensure that there is a strong match between the needs of businesses and the skills available.

- Strong connections have been developed with the people of Donegal that live around the world through the Donegal Diaspora project with increasing opportunities to reach out and attract talent to Donegal.

The public consultation process found that there is, not only a need to promote Donegal as a destination for remote working, but that there is a low level of awareness among potential workers in Donegal on the remote working job opportunities available. Remote working has the potential to offer opportunities to individuals who are unable or are restricted from securing employment in the traditional workplace. For example, the flexible nature of many remote working jobs offers opportunities for people with caring responsibilities or people with disabilities and in turn, increasing the levels of participation in the workforce.



6. REMOTE WORKING: INFLUENCING FACTORS FOR EMPLOYERS



PROXIMITY TO INNOVATORS

Some large organisations use co-working spaces to nurture creativity and innovation. Curating the mix of employees, start-ups, entrepreneurs, freelancers, researchers and academics can provide real innovation opportunities for large multinationals.



SUSTAINABILITY

Talented people can work from their local areas, reducing congestion, greenhouse emissions and commuting times resulting in a lower cost of living, preservation of natural resources and improvement in infrastructure, while also maintaining the social and economic fabric of towns and villages.



NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES

Many employers encourage employees to network beyond their own teams as much as possible. From educational seminars, social gatherings, business briefings and wellness programmes, companies in remote working hubs can gain access to extensive networks.



REDUCED COST

Companies can avoid spending time and resources on expensive leases, cleaning, and utility bills and lower costs leads to higher profits. A study by Stanford University found that profitability increased by 21% when remote working was introduced to half the workforce of a large telecommunications firm.²



FLEXIBILITY

Remote working can provide organisations with greater flexibility, for example companies can place a project team near a target market for a short duration. They are also better equipped to spot emerging trends and new opportunities from remote working hubs, as it stimulates collaboration among likeminded people.



TALENT ACQUISITION & RETENTION

Access to skilled talent is one of the key challenges facing multinational companies and a survey by Zapier.com, revealed that 74% of the workforce would prefer to quit a job for one that offers remote working.³ Many organisations are increasingly looking to remote working as a tool to attract and retain staff.



INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY

Recent studies have shown that remote working can result in increased productivity. A study into the productivity of Ctrip, China's largest travel agency, revealed that remote workers were 13% more productive than onsite employees, the equivalent of almost an extra day a week.⁴ A more recent survey by Airtasker found that remote workers work an additional 1.4 days per month than their in-office employees.

² Bloom Nicholas, "Does working from home work? Evidence from a Chinese experiment", Quarterly Journal Of Economics, March 2015

³ Zapier, The Remote Work Report, 2019

⁴ Bloom Nicholas, "Does working from home work? Evidence from a Chinese experiment", Quarterly Journal Of Economics, March 2015

7. REMOTE WORKING: INFLUENCING FACTORS FOR EMPLOYEES



FLEXIBILITY

This is one of the key factors influencing employees to seek out remote working opportunities as they desire a better work life balance and more flexible options. Employees want to be able to balance family commitments with their careers. However, while remote working does support flexible working conditions, remote workers are often working longer hours and these can spill over into their personal life as the line between work and home is blurred.



HOUSING

The high cost of housing in urban areas can be a key factor for employees. There is better value for money when purchasing a home in rural parts of Ireland compared with main urban areas such as Dublin.



CHILDCARE

To be close to affordable quality childcare supported by a larger network of family and friends is an important consideration to families when considering remote working. The cost of childcare in Ireland is high at 28% of the average wage, while the EU average is 12%.



EDUCATION

The ratio of teacher to children in classrooms in Donegal is much better than urban centers such as Dublin. There are numerous primary and secondary level schools available throughout the county, as well as post secondary level institutions (LYIT) and Further Education and Training services available (FET).



TRAVEL

This was the most important factor in WDC - NUIG Survey. The time spent commuting to a work place and its associated costs are a key influencing factor for remote working. In particular those commuting from suburban areas into cities spend longer travelling by either public transport or their own vehicles.



HEALTH & WELLBEING

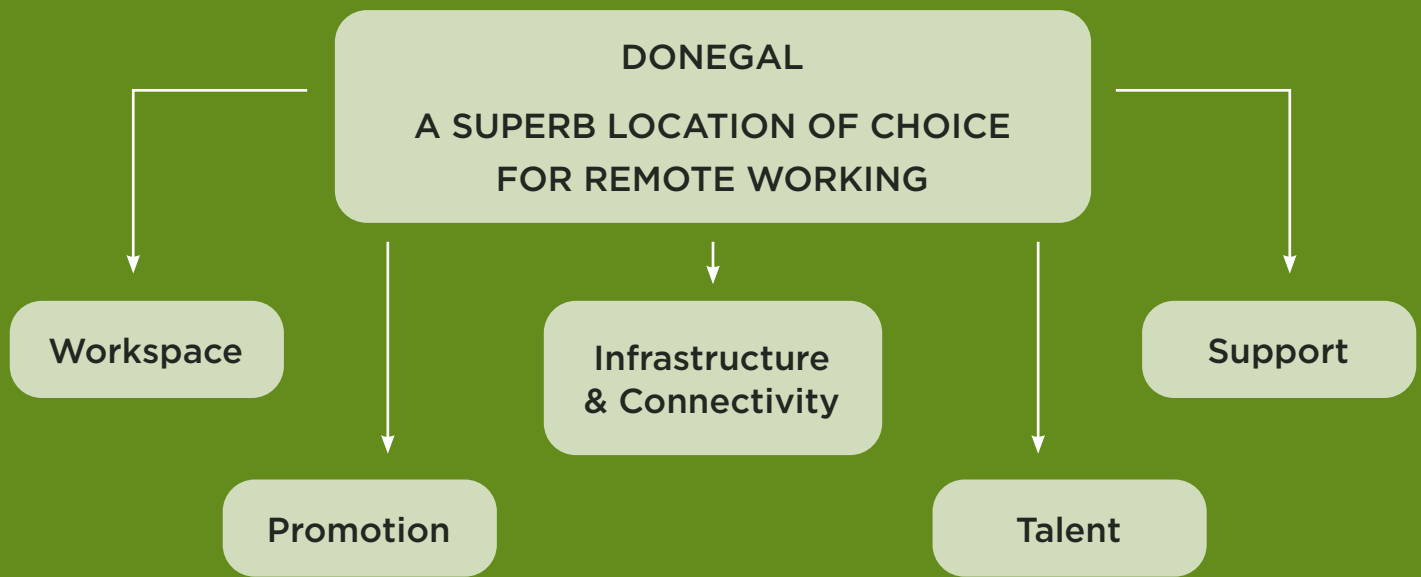
Remote workers tend to experience improved health and well being such as reduced stress, better morale and less illness. There are many health benefits to remote working, but it is also important to understand that factors such as loneliness and isolation can also negatively impact health and well being.



QUALITY OF LIFE & COMMUNITY SPIRIT

This was identified as a key factor for influencing employees to seek remote working. The rural residential opportunities, providing that idyll or desire for a rural lifestyle, are complemented by the latent supply of rural dwellings that exists and enables the avoidance of adding to the numbers of speculative new builds.

8. VISION STATEMENT AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES



8.1 WORKSPACE

The need for accessible and affordable co-working spaces including digital hubs and other flexible co-working solutions is essential.

We will:

- Support the continued development and delivery of a network of digital hubs / co- working spaces in Donegal by working in collaboration with development organisations and funding bodies and programmes, as well as promoting incentives and supports (as outlined in the National Remote Working Strategy) for remote workers in the region.
- Work with existing digital hub operators to support the continued development of hubs to ensure they meet the emerging needs of remote workers and employers. This includes supporting the established network of hubs to ensure they are in a position to leverage economies of scale in research, collaboration, training and funding applications.
- Explore opportunities for the delivery of innovative flexible co-working solutions by leveraging existing infrastructure including through the Broadband Connection Points (BCP) programme, engaging with local communities and businesses to put in place solutions that meet the needs of remote workers.
- Facilitate engagement of digital hubs and co-working spaces through networking opportunities at a local, regional and national level ensuring that Donegal hubs are well represented on regional and national platforms as well as availing of opportunities from regional and national programmes and activities. This includes engagement through the Atlantic Economic Corridor Network and opportunities to avail of national/regional initiatives such as the new online booking facility.





8.2 PROMOTION

There is a need to promote Donegal as a great location for remote working and to raise awareness among employees and employers in a targeted and effective manner.

We will:

- Develop an effective marketing strategy promoting Donegal as destination for remote working. This will be undertaken in the context of the new Donegal Place Brand and will include a defined messaging and communications strategy that will incorporate an effective social media strategy.
- Engage proactively with remote working organisations and regional employment agencies to raise awareness of remote working job opportunities to job seekers in Donegal.
- Engage with key partners including Tourism and Diaspora interests to develop innovative campaigns and initiatives to promote remote working opportunities with a view to increasing visitors and ultimately attracting talent to Donegal. For example the delivery of a 'Town Taster' initiative.
- Put in place a concerted campaign that showcases innovation and creativity in Donegal with a particular focus on highlighting the innovative eco-systems and supportive environment for start-ups and early entrepreneurs as well as academia and industry collaborations and opportunities for large multinationals to further nurture their own creativity and innovation.
- Collaborate with key stakeholders and relevant agencies to target companies and industries that have strong remote working policies or operate fully remote highlighting what Donegal has to offer as a remote working destination of choice.
- Develop a marketing strategy with key partners that is aimed at profiling and promoting the stories of the remote working experiences from the perspective of people in Donegal, as well as promoting remote working as an alternative to traditional work for those who are unable to travel for work.





8.3 SUPPORT

Support for both employers and employees, has been identified as a key requirement in the positioning of Donegal as a great location for remote working.

We will:

- Develop an online platform that will provide practical information for employees and employers including for example with information on workspace availability, broadband / connectivity, technology applications and a helpline or one to one support for remote workers or potential remote workers as well as links to information on rights and responsibilities for both employers and employees.
- Proactively engage with and support the efforts of remote working support groups such as Grow Remote to ensure effective supports and services are available to remote workers and employers in Donegal.
- Collaborate with regional training providers such as Donegal Education and Training Board (ETB) to develop remote work training programmes to meet the needs of both workers and employers to ensure an agile, skilled workforce.

- Work with various partners to host, promote and participate both online and off line networking events to allow employees and employers to engage and network. This may include events such as community/ social events, information sessions, panel discussions etc.

8.4 TALENT

Access to talent is a key influencing factor for employers when considering remote working opportunities and there is a need to have information on talent and skills availability in the region.

We will:

- Undertake a talent mapping exercise to identify skills available in Donegal and the North West Region with a view to targeting potential employers and investors and to inform future skills and workforce development programmes.
- Target the Donegal Diaspora highlighting the benefits of relocating or returning to work remotely from Donegal. This will include targeting national hub networks, remote working recruiters, national and regional organisations and existing diaspora networks.



8.5 INFRASTRUCTURE AND CONNECTIVITY

The availability of good quality infrastructure such as broadband, mobile phone coverage, childcare services, education, housing, recreational amenities, libraries, cultural services and so on contribute significantly to the quality of life aspect of living in a place like Donegal and is a key determinant for employees considering a remote working location.

We will:

- Work with National Broadband Ireland through Donegal County Councils Broadband Office to facilitate the smooth roll out of the National Broadband Plan in Donegal.
- Provide advice and support to businesses and potential remote workers on broadband availability and connectivity in Donegal through the Councils Business Concierge Service and Broadband Office.
- Work in partnership with key stakeholders to deliver the ambitious Donegal Digital agenda with a view to achieving digital transformation across towns and villages and enhance digital connectivity in Donegal through a range of innovative initiatives.
- Explore the potential of delivering a pilot smart town/village programme under the auspices of the Donegal Digital agenda.
- Continue to work to deliver a range of essential strategic infrastructural projects including the Donegal Ten-T Improvement National Roads Project to enhance the county's connectivity and accessibility.

- Continue to raise awareness at national and EU level of the structural deficits experienced in Donegal and the need for enhanced strategic investment to mitigate the challenges and risks presented by the emerging impact of Brexit and Covid-19.
- Work to enhance the quality of life through the delivery of a range of Council services and supports including Cultural services, Community Development activities, Greenway and Trail development, Regeneration & Development programme and Town & Village Enhancement Schemes.
- Continue to maximize potential of Council owned land and property as second site locations for businesses interested in relocating to Donegal.

Donegal County Council's Economic Development Division will work with key partners to facilitate the implementation of this Remote Working Strategy for Business and specific actions will be devised and delivered in accordance with the priority areas set out.

Implementation will be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis with a view to ensuring that our approach remains agile and keeps abreast of changing circumstances so that priorities can be pivoted as needs and opportunities emerge. Implementation will be reviewed on a quarterly basis with progress reports presented as part of Donegal County Councils Annual Report.





9. IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Donegal County Council's Economic Development Division will work with key partners to facilitate the implementation of this Remote Working Strategy for Business and specific actions will be devised and delivered in accordance with the priority areas set out.

Implementation will be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis with a view to ensuring that our approach remains agile and keeps abreast of changing circumstances so that priorities can be pivoted as needs and opportunities emerge. Implementation will be reviewed on a quarterly basis with progress reports presented as part of Donegal County Councils Annual Report.

APPENDIX 1:

ORGANISATIONS WHO ENGAGED WITH THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION PROCESS:

- Derry City & Strabane District Council
- Donegal ETB
- Arranmore Island Community Council
- Westbic
- IBEC
- Western Development Commission
- Donegal Music Partnership
- EU Remote Jobs
- NorthWest Gateway to Growth
- Wee Greenway Initiative
- Employment Response (DEASP)
- Inishowen Development Partnership
- Donegal Women in Business Network
- Letterkenny Chamber of Commerce
- A range of businesses, organisations & individuals operating in Donegal.