

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release
Monday, 23 January 2012

MWRA Conference To Discuss Regional Economic Development

Planning and Housing Minister, Jan O'Sullivan, T.D., will join economic and regional development agencies from across Ireland at the Mid-West Regional Authority's (MWRA) annual conference, details of which were announced today.

The future competitiveness of the Mid-West Region, the importance of international connectivity, the Irish export market, and the potential for the Irish Agri-food business sector will be the main topics of discussion at the organisation's 17th annual conference in the Falls Hotel, Ennistymon, Co Clare, on 17th February.

The event also will feature the launch by the MWRA of the *Mid-West Regional Profile 2012*, the most comprehensive socio-economic review of the region ever produced.

The event will be attended by up to 150 industry officials and members of local authorities, public and private sector agencies, semi-state and civil society organisations and research institutions involved in the promotion of business and development in Ireland.

Speakers scheduled to address the conference – entitled “Economic Development in the Regions: The Way Forward” – include Jan O'Sullivan T.D., Minister of State for Housing & Planning; Fiona Monaghan, **Fáilte Ireland**; John Whelan, CEO, **Irish Exporters' Association**; Maria Ginnity, Enterprise Manager, **Forfás**; Pat Keating, CEO of **Shannon-Foynes Port Company**; and Mr. Edmond Gleeson, Mid-West Regional, Authority Designated Manager and Manager, **Limerick County Council**.

Cllr. Joe Leddin, MWRA Cathaoirleach said the upcoming conference will enable key policy makers and implementation bodies at a local, regional and national level to share their expertise on the issue of regional economic recovery and balanced regional economic development.

He added: “For 17 years this event has promoted the benefits of adopting a collaborative approach to regional development. The Mid West Regional Authority is committed to engaging with local, regional and national development agencies in ensuring that regions, including the Mid-West, are well placed to respond to the serious challenges posed by the downturn in the global economy”.

Commenting on the publication of the *Mid-West Regional Profile*, which will be launched at the Conference, **MWRA Director Liam Conneally** stated: “A key objective of this report is to give an inclusive and factual profile on key sectors in the Region that will form the basis for determining plans and policies for the future of our region, and encourage further international and indigenous investment into the Mid-West.”

The Profile, the most comprehensive of its kind ever produced for the Region, offers a strategic planning framework for the Mid-West Region, and has been developed through a collaborative process involving the inputs of local authorities, third level institutions, public and private sector agencies, semi-state and civil society organisations and research institutions.

The Profile builds upon the Central Statistics Office (CSO) publication of preliminary *Census 2011* results released in June 2011, and consolidates all other relevant statistics to give a comprehensive overview of the Region.

According to Mr. Conneally: “The principle behind compiling such a report primarily stems from a lack of combined up-to-date statistical data.”

He continued: “It is hoped that this consolidated document will assist decision-makers, relevant stakeholders and policy makers in the Mid-West and provide an evidence base to support their decisions. We anticipate that this, in turn, will help to ensure the Mid-West Region is well positioned to benefit from and contribute to future economic improvements”.

Registration for the upcoming MWRA Conference takes place on the evening of Thursday, 16th February. The Conference will be officially opened on the morning of Friday, 17th February by Minister of State Jan O’Sullivan, T.D.

Further details can be obtained from the Nenagh-based Mid-West Regional Authority on Tel: (067) 33197; Email: info@mwra.ie, or Web: www.mwra.ie.

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Notes To Editor:

- **Photograph and interview** opportunities can be arranged on request. The **Conference Programme** also is available on request. Please contact Mark Dunphy of Dunphy Public Relations on (mobile) 086-8534900 or (email) media@dunphypr.com.
- **Directions to Falls Hotel Spa Resort from Galway** – Take the N18 Going South. At Kilcolgan, approximately 15kms from Galway turn right and follow signs to Ennistymon (Approximately 40kms). Once in Ennistymon, take the first turn right. **Directions to Falls Hotel Spa Resort from Limerick/Shannon Airport** – Take the M18 North to Ennis. In Ennis, take the first exit off the main Limerick/Galway roundabout (N85), heading for Lahinch. After approximately 20kms, you will arrive into Ennistymon; take the second left for the Falls Hotel.