

Future WestCork

let's talk!

THE FUTURE IS OUR COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY

Future West Cork is an initiative designed to bring West Cork communities together to discuss their ideas about how the region will develop into the future, and to create a shared regional vision.

As the world changes, more and more responsibility for the future is being passed down to a local and regional level. Many of our small communities and businesses are unlikely to have the capacity or resources to deal with the challenges of the future alone. By coming together as a regional community, and creating our shared vision, we can build the critical mass of thinking and resources to take charge of our own future. This will help us take the collective actions to create future prosperity across the region, and build the vibrant communities we all want.



FUTURE WEST CORK - NEXT STEPS

Key long-term strategic action areas have now been identified. These provide a useful starting point to begin working to steer our region towards the preferred future.

Public input has identified a number of key priority action areas, including:

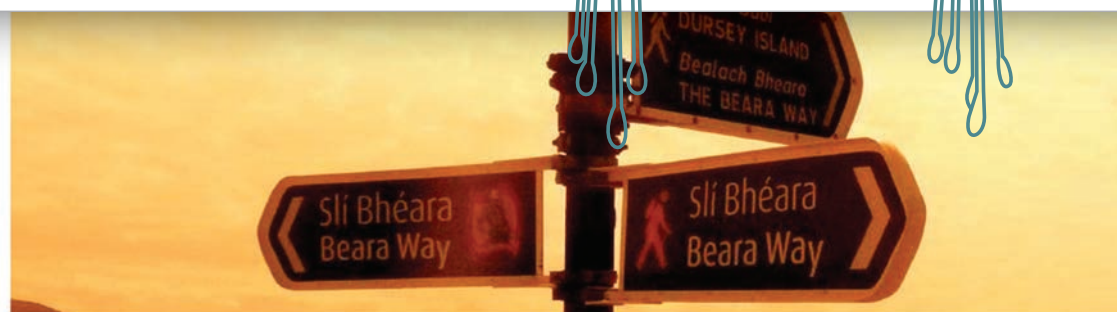
- Renewable energy
- Food sector and local food systems
- Eco and nature-based tourism
- Community building and leadership
- Building innovative businesses
- Youth and education
- Technology
- Agriculture and fishing sectors

HELP SHAPE THE FUTURE OF OUR REGION

During the Future West Cork Initiative, many residents and organisations said they wanted to continue to be part of the conversation, and be actively involved in making the vision a reality. Already, we are seeing new projects and ideas coming forward that are connected to the emerging regional vision.

Future West Cork

A Vision for the Future



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West Cork Region – 2030

A vision for the future created by the people of West Cork

This report provides a summary of visioning work as part of the Future West Cork initiative.

June, 2012

Future West Cork is an initiative of the West Cork Development Partnership.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON HOW YOU CAN BE INVOLVED

For more information on the Future West Cork initiative, or to get more background on the regional visioning process please visit our website www.futurewestcork.com or contact:

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Future iQ Partners worked with the West Cork Development Partnership to design and implement the Future West Cork initiative.

West Cork Region Our Future Vision 2030

ECONOMY AND INDUSTRIES

We have a vibrant, self-sufficient economy built on our highly regarded landscape and well-managed natural resources. There is a diverse mix of innovative businesses building on our established artisan food, agriculture, marine, sustainable forestry, and renewable energy industries. Our eco-tourism industry has grown, and our region is now a world-class destination for people wanting an authentic recreation and local food experience. We have built our creative economy, and our business culture encourages new entrepreneurs. This culture, and our local infrastructure, drives the technology sector that now provides many diverse, quality jobs and career paths for our people.

COMMUNITY AND SOCIETY

We have mastered the art of 'joined up thinking'. Our proud, engaged and vibrant villages and communities form the basis of our tight-knit social fabric and our cohesive region. Our leaders ensure the region is at the forefront of innovation and meaningful community engagement. We have a forward looking and optimistic culture that helps us deal powerfully with the many challenges in a changing world. Many of region's young people choose to remain in the area. Our education system is producing fine students, who now have local access to third-level education, skills development and vocational training. We have retained the enviable 'West Cork feel' to our towns, villages and lifestyle.

ENVIRONMENT AND LANDSCAPE

Because we have long cared about where we live, our region has adapted well to the increasing global concerns about landscape protection. Through our careful planning, the landscape has retained its intrinsic beauty and appeal. We know our future depends on what we do now, so we have created sophisticated systems to manage recycling, waste, flooding and emissions. Our renewable energy sector is our pride, and ensures our self-sufficiency. We have become masterful at carefully balancing development and growth with protection and preservation. This has allowed an easy marriage of economic prosperity and sustainability principles.

HERITAGE AND CULTURE

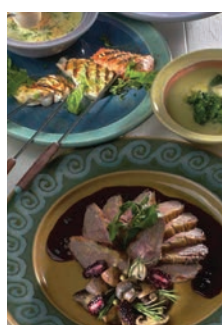
We have always had a fierce pride of our region; now we have reason to smile. We have found our way out of the 'great recession' that followed the Celtic Tiger years. Our history and culture has been preserved, and we are finding new ways to tell our story and fulfill on our vision. We are once again regarded as 'the place to be' for aspiring musicians, artists and writers. Newfound optimism in our region draws back home our people from around the world. We have something to offer – hope in the future and a good life. Our schools are full, our villages are bustling, and our culture is intact.

Working together, we have created a progressive and renowned rural region of cohesive and engaged communities. Guided by the principles of balanced sustainability, our social, cultural, natural and economic assets are optimised through innovation and creativity, to achieve a vibrant future and improved quality of life for us all.

THINGS THAT MIGHT BE HAPPENING IN 2030



ENERGY
SELF
SUFFICIENT



LOCAL
FOOD
SYSTEMS



GLOBAL
REPUTATION
AND BRAND



CONNECTED
TO THE
WORLD



DESTINATION
FOR
ADVENTURE



THIRD
LEVEL
EDUCATION



ENGAGED
REGIONAL
COMMUNITY



INNOVATIVE
NEW
BUSINESSES



ENGAGED
YOUNG
PEOPLE



STRONG
AGRICULTURE
AND FISHING



EXPORTING
NEW
PRODUCTS

HOW DO WE BUILD A REGIONAL COMMUNITY?

While our communities are close-knit, we have not yet created a strong regional network. How do we come together as a true regional community and share our resources and ideas? How can we learn from each other's successes and ideas?

HOW DO WE PRESERVE OUR HERITAGE?

We have a proud history and strong heritage. How do we further enhance our heritage, when the world is becoming more globalised and immigration changes our cultural and population? How do we keep young people connected to our region and their homeland?

HOW WILL OUR FARMING AND FISHING STAY COMPETITIVE?

Our farming and fishing sectors are part of our social and landscape fabric. Increasing regulations and competition challenge these industries. How can we keep adding value to our food-based industries?

HOW DO WE HARNESS OUR RENEWABLE ENERGY CAPACITY?

We have a lot of natural energy sources, including wind, water, tides and biomass. Oil based energy is expensive and challenges our future. How can we become energy independent, and even an energy exporter helping create new jobs?

HOW CAN WE BE OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE FUTURE?

With high unemployment, large national debt and poor economic growth, it is hard to be optimistic. To create our future, we will need to be future-focused and have an optimistic mindset. How do we stay enthusiastic, and keep people engaged and working for the long haul?

HOW CAN WE CREATE STRONG LOCAL LEADERSHIP?

Leadership and vision will be important to keep us working together towards the future vision. How can we build our next generation of leaders? How do we best connect our region to the world and harness new ideas and resources?

HOW DO WE CREATE NEW JOBS AND BUSINESSES?

Innovation and new businesses drive our future economy. How do we now do this in a period of greater economic challenge? How can we create the kind of jobs and industries that will give our people a meaningful future, and fit into our vision?

HOW COULD THIS FUTURE HAPPEN?

The foundation to make this vision a reality is largely in place. Some of our current strengths include:

- We are learning to create 'joined-up thinking'
- The Fuchsia Brand gives regional identity to our strong food industry
- Trends support nature-based and eco-tourism have a long history
- Our environment is clean and we have abundant natural resources
- Innovative businesses already exist and are growing
- West Cork people are proud of their communities, heritage and culture
- Natural resource industries, such as forestry and farming are strong
- We are becoming more connected to the world

CHALLENGES IN MAKING THIS FUTURE A REALITY

To make this vision a reality will require hard work, resources and collective action. We will have to make trade-offs, and set priorities. Some of our challenges in making this future a reality will include:

- Managing the tension between development and preservation
- Engaging people, leaders and organisations to share this vision
- Competition between parts of the region and between communities
- Changes in our National Government and EU policies
- Reversing our current high unemployment levels
- Creating opportunities so young people stay in the region
- Finding the resources and enthusiasm to work on our future
- Creating a positive, future focused mindset

CREATING THE REGIONAL VISION STATEMENT

This vision statement has been created by the people of the West Cork Region through detailed community engagement during 2011 and early 2012.

Through extensive surveys, and public and industry workshops, people talked about what they wanted to see in the future. This vision statement is drawn directly from this input, and built on the SEE West Cork Scenario description.



FUTURE WEST CORK STORY

Future West Cork is an initiative designed to bring the West Cork region and communities together to discuss ideas about how the region will develop into the future, and to create a shared regional vision.

It began in 2010, when a group of regional stakeholders and representatives came together for a 2-day workshop to explore future plausible scenarios for the region, looking out to 2030. In 2011 and early 2012, community and industry engagement sessions were held across the West Cork Region, with some **800 people** participating in workshops, discussions and focus groups. At these sessions, people explored the scenarios and thought about their potential impact and consequences.

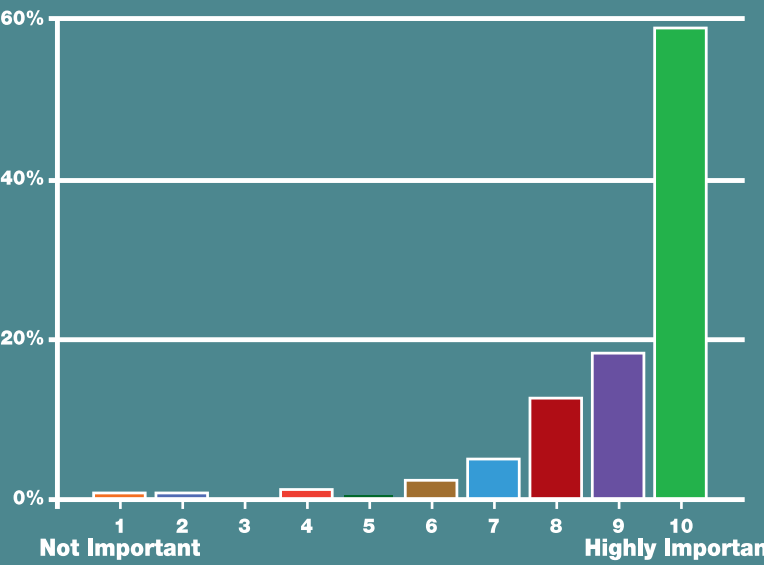
Detailed input and surveys were collected, and this was then analyzed and a draft vision statement was prepared, that reflects the preferred scenario and the additional information and input collected. People also discussed what their ideas were for action steps and what should happen next.

WHAT WE LEARNT ABOUT OURSELVES

A lot of valuable survey information was collected, and we learnt a lot about our future, our culture and ourselves.

- People in West Cork believe having a vision is important
- We don't think we are well connected as region, with **83% of people** saying we are weak at our regional networks and connections
- **96% of people** thought we were weak at having a participatory approach to decision making
- We have a strong foundation of pride, and a culture of self reliance and being willing to do things ourselves
- Nearly **98% of people** thought we were weak at having a deliberate transition of power to new leaders.
- Over **60% of people** thought we have done a good job as a region to creatively build new economic opportunities.
- Only **25% of people** thought we had an optimistic and future focused culture.

How important is it to have a shared vision for social, community and economic development in West Cork?



As a region, we have strengths and weaknesses. We have a good foundation to build on, but we need to take heed of what we have to improve. There is an overwhelming view we need to think about developing new leaders, better connecting our region, deliberately engaging more people and building an optimistic mindset.

FACTS AND FIGURES

- During 2010 and 2011, some **800 local residents** participated and shared their views and desires for the future.
- **Over 30 workshops** were held right across the region including industry focus groups, school sessions and open community meetings.
- Results and activities were shared and promoted through a unique website, **www.futurewestcork.com**
- Detailed survey data were collected from nearly **400 residents**, then compiled and analyzed to create the regional vision.
- The Future Game – Ireland, was developed as part of this initiative. This unique tool helps people explore decision making and consequences in the West Cork Region.
- West Cork Development Partnership, as part of its commitment to develop a prosperous and vibrant region, has hosted the Future West Cork initiative.



NEXT STEPS

The work done so far is not the end of the process. We want to keep the conversation going in our region, and work out how we can all work together to make the preferred future a reality. Everyone has a role to play, and all of our collective actions and efforts will be needed.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information, please contact:
West Cork Development Partnership
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Phone: Clonakilty, Ireland + 353 (0) 23 883 4035
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West Cork Region - 2030 Creating Our Future

From 2010 until early 2012, people in West Cork engaged in a wide-ranging discussions about four plausible scenarios for the future of the region. They explored the implications and consequences for the region's economy, landscape and communities. People considered which scenario represented the preferred future, and which they thought most likely to occur.

Soul in a Hole

The *Soul in a Hole* scenario pictures a region with positives and negatives with a vision for the future that continually falls down economically. In 2030, the soul of West Cork seems to be shining through. Local community groups are well organised and are connected across the region. There is a strong community spirit to make major changes to manage the environment and to foster civic, cultural and community action. However, the region is in a hole economically.

The spirit is strong, but economic development is weak. The region has never really recovered from the debilitating "global financial crisis" of the early 2000s. For the last three decades growth across the region has been patchy, resulting in a two-level economy. There is well-developed eco-tourism, which has driven development around the coast and is supported by co-ordinated landscape management. It is a different story in the interior, with high unemployment, outward migration among young people and vacant towns. There are fewer commercial farmers and a lack of strong indigenous industry. In 2028, the "State of West Cork" report helped to galvanise the community to action. This report highlighted the two-level economy, mental health issues and potential pressure on the environment from coastal development.



4% OF PEOPLE

said this was the preferred future

26% OF PEOPLE

said this future is most likely to emerge

Regional economic growth and innovation stagnates, leaving the region reliant on traditional industries and skills.

What might happen if we can't optimize our economic opportunities?



<1% OF PEOPLE

said this was the preferred future

30% OF PEOPLE

said this future is most likely to emerge

The Great Divide

The *Great Divide* scenario sees a region with some winners and many losers. In 2030, the region is in a state of flux, in all senses of the word. The landscape has changed, due to environmental degradation, flooding and inappropriate development. The social landscape has been reshaped around larger towns and rural holdings, with 'ghost villages' in rural areas largely unoccupied and an economy that concentrates around food and energy parks.

In this future, the economy is based on agriculture, food and energy. The region is largely a service area providing food and energy to Cork City with milk and dairy products exported further afield. Development in the region has been on a 'nodal' basis around a previously existing infrastructure. Tourism has declined due to an ageing infrastructure and the threat of flooding. Most tourism is now limited to isolated exclusive retreats for wealthy visitors. The majority of the population is located in towns, while the wealthier have moved to the countryside for a comfortable life away from troubled urban areas where the poverty gap leads to social issues. The young move to urban areas for employment, while older people move to other locations with a lower cost of living.



The region is fragmented, with each sector and community working on their own projects, leading to competition and confusion about the overall direction.

A close-knit network of leaders and stakeholder who help engage the community around the vision, and drives new partnerships and action across the region.



What might happen if we come together to create our regional future?



95% OF PEOPLE

said this was the preferred future

10% OF PEOPLE

said this future is most likely to emerge



What might happen if we are able to optimize our economic opportunities?

<1% OF PEOPLE

said this was the preferred future

34% OF PEOPLE

said this future is most likely to emerge



New and innovative economic opportunities are quickly identified and turned into business and job growth, driving overall regional prosperity and employment.

SEE West Cork

The *SEE West Cork* (Social, Economic and Environmental West Cork) scenario pictures a prosperous, vibrant region. The year 2030 sees the region as an inspiring example worldwide. This has occurred over the past twenty years thanks to cohesive vision, community action, investment in infrastructure and education, co-operation across all sectors of the community, a lot of hard work and probably just a little luck.

The region has a vibrant, resilient economy, well-managed environment, excellent infrastructure and strong social capital. The economy is based on a diverse mix of agriculture food production, sustainable forestry, timber products, eco-tourism, IT based international services and green energy and now boasts its' greatest population growth in recent history. West Cork has an internationally recognized 'brand' promoting all that the region has to offer. The community is inclusive of all of its diverse groups, with a voice for all and a positive outlook. Many of regions' young people choose to remain in the area benefitting from economic and social opportunities while living in a beautiful environment. It is a desirable region in which to live and this brings its own pressures on land use and other resources.

Growth Without Care

The *Growth Without Care* scenario pictures a mixed region with economic development but a lack of public engagement, resulting in polarised outcomes. In 2030, West Cork has a two-level society. Some people are in high paying work, working long hours, while the majority are in lower paid jobs. Development is focussed on the coastal areas, while much of the interior is missing the boom times. Everywhere one looks there are positives and negatives.

In this future, the economy is booming. New and traditional industries are being developed in the region including tourism, renewable energy, health and care, food and building. Multinational companies that were encouraged to invest in Ireland own most of these. Sustainable energy, owned and operated by an overseas consortium, is now a reality. The region boasts full employment, although two-thirds of all jobs are in low wage, production and service positions. There is high immigration encouraged by prospects for work. The regions once noted civic spirit continues to decline amidst the economic prosperity. There are serious social issues, less time for social engagement, marginalised groups and little local engagement in planning. It feels like a return to the Celtic Tiger years.

95% of people said SEE West Cork most represented the preferred scenario for the future of our region, but **only 10% of people** think it will happen. How do we change this, and make this future a reality? We now need your help to create our future together!