

People power key to attract investment

PEOPLE power can help to attract investment and new business opportunities to Kerry and companies thinking about setting up in the county need to know that the local people and agencies in the county will look after them when they get here, Kerry County Council Chief Executive, Moira Murrell, told the Killarney Economic Conference.

She said in addition to showcasing skills and infrastructure, it was also vital to let potential investors know that Kerry will do everything possible to ensure they feel welcome here.

“We have to say to companies coming into Kerry ‘We’ll mind you, we’ll make life easy for you, we’ll do what we can for you, we’ll work with you’,” she said.

Ms Murrell noted that just six companies in Kerry employ 250 people or more, 90 per cent employ less than 10 people and there are 1,350 working with Kerry County Council alone.

“It’s our job to go to bed and worry about the county and that’s the remit,” she said.

The council CEO acknowledged that while Tralee is Kerry’s administrative capital and a town on the rise, Killarney is the economic engine of the county and tourism was the main driver.

One in five people across Kerry are employed, in some shape or form, in tourism and it’s worth in the order of €600 million to the economy of the county.

There are, for example, between 600 and 700 people working in the Gleneagle Group where the Killarney Economic Conference was being held, she noted.

“Tourism is something we are very careful to mind and grow and plan for”.

Ms Murrell also highlighted the remarkable progress made in Killorglin which is a progressive rural town, driven by the financial services and a strong med-tech base.

“It is one of those very unusual rural areas in so far as it bucks the trend. You have twice as many people travelling to the town as you have resident there because there is so much employment there. It’s a great model for what can be done,” she said.

The council chief also acknowledged that outside of the Killarney-Tralee-Killorglin triangle, areas in the north and south of the county have seen rural decline.

Access was also key to attracting investment to the county and continued growth at Kerry Airport was hugely important for business in Kerry, Ms Murrell insisted

Shannon Airport is just an hour and a half up the road and there is also Cork Airport and when the three facilities are looked at as a bundle there is huge access, she maintained.