



**Enniscorthy
& District
Chamber**
Advancing business together

Submission to the Draft Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy



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Enniscorthy is a Key Town

It is Enniscorthy and District Chamber's view that the current Draft Regional and Economic Spatial Strategy will **constrain the growth of a vibrant Town** and threaten to reverse the clear trend of progress currently enjoyed by this town of nearly 12,000 people, as well as denying County Wexford of its fair share of economic development opportunities because of the disproportionately low numbers of population in the towns proposed, relative to the overall population of County Wexford.

Key Town

- ❖ Enniscorthy is the second largest town in County Wexford. An exceptionally vibrant town that has experienced sustained growth in the last 20 years with a population of 11,381 in the 2016 census. Enniscorthy is designated as a 'larger town' by the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) and, therefore, plays an important economic role in the regional context.
- ❖ Enniscorthy is strategically located in the centre of County Wexford with access to many other South East Towns and Cities. Waterford City, Kilkenny City, Carlow, Gorey and Wexford town are all within a 60 minute drive or less. It has immediate access to the M11/N11, N30 and N80 with a Motorway Link direct to Dublin opening in June 2019 through a Double By-Pass of the N11 and N30 around the town.
- ❖ Enniscorthy has enjoyed substantial recent Public Investment in Roads (€280 Million), and Waste Water Treatment (€16 Million) which allows for its potential growth to a population of 26,000 and is well placed to accommodate additional economic growth going forward.

(See Appendix 1)

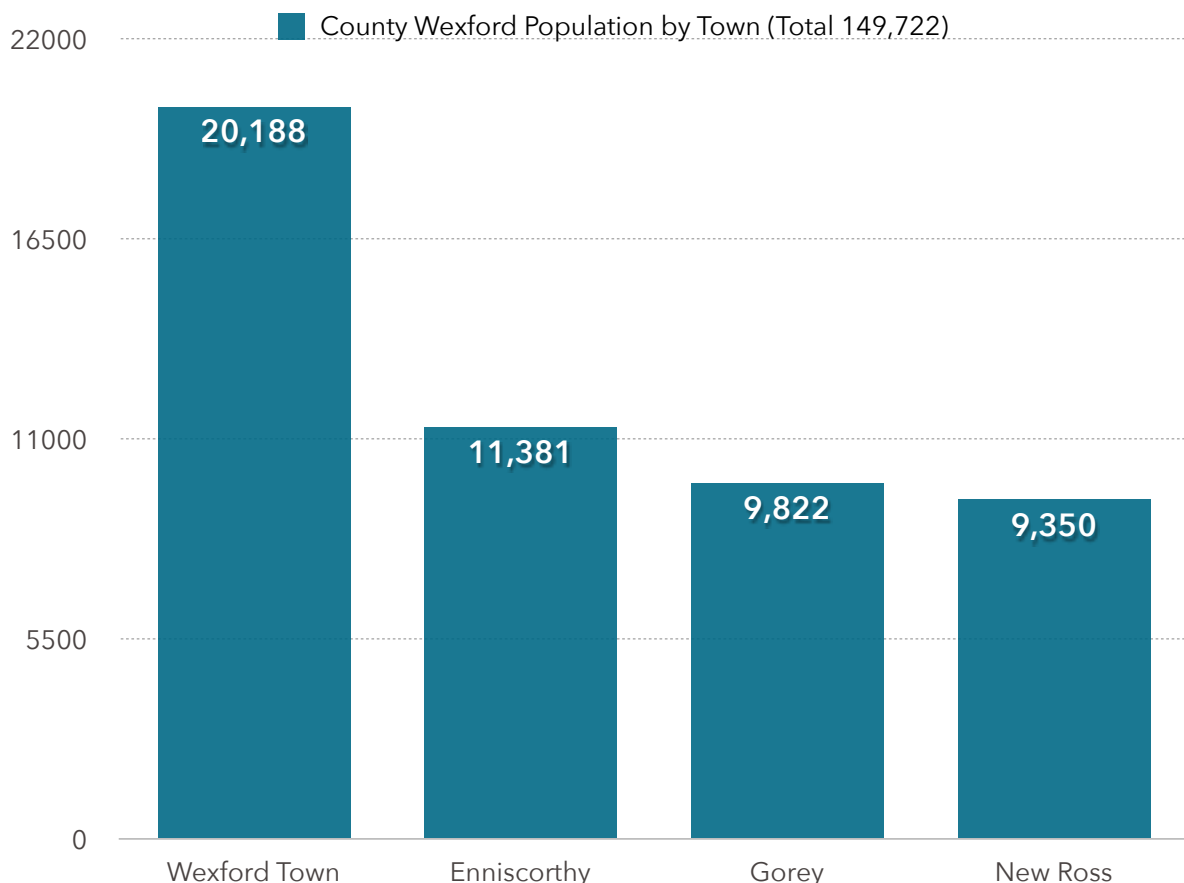
- ❖ A number of international Life-Science and technological companies are based in Enniscorthy as well as a thriving local Industrial Zone in the Old Dublin Road area where over 70 businesses trade from. There is a new technological park under construction with one of the buildings housing one of only 3 in the world 'Centres of Excellence' in NZEB (Nearly Zero Energy Buildings) construction.

❖ Enniscorthy is a Cathedral town (boasting one of the finest Pugin designed Cathedral's in the country) with a very large rural hinterland sitting in one of the South East's most picturesque settings on the banks of the River Slaney. Enniscorthy has a 1,500 year history, making it one of the oldest settlements in Ireland's Ancient East and forms part of a vibrant tourism cluster based on linked coastal resorts. Enniscorthy has three vibrant and expanding Hotels, a National 1798 Museum and a Norman Castle, dating back to 1190, all of which add substantially to the overall County Tourism offering, with County Wexford attracting the fifth largest number of domestic visitors of all the counties in the country.



Executive Summary of Arguments for Inclusion:

- ❖ Enniscorthy is ideally positioned to benefit from Euroroute One, which will see the construction of a motorway from Rosslare to Belfast. Euroroute One, Ireland’s only designated Euroroute, will stretch from Larne in County Antrim connecting Belfast and Dublin to East coast ports as far South as Rosslare.
- ❖ With Enniscorthy’s Industrial heartland located less than a mile from the Euroroute and with excellent access roads in place, the potential for economic growth hardly needs to be emphasised. The Enniscorthy by-pass or high speed dual carriageway of Euroroute One is set to open in the third quarter of this year and already considerable interest is being expressed in the suitability of the town as a location for investment.
- ❖ In order to maximise Enniscorthy’s potential, however, it is imperative that Enniscorthy be included in the Regional Spatial Strategy Plan. Failure to do so will condemn the town to economic wilderness from which it may never recover.
- ❖ **Population.** Enniscorthy is the second largest town in County Wexford with arguably the largest local hinterland. (See Appendix 2)



Stronger Population by including Enniscorthy as a Key Town

Comparatively, County Wexford's key towns represent the lowest percentage of representation based on metropolitan areas and key towns. Wexford and Gorey represent 20.04% of County Wexford's population whereas Kilkenny City represents 26.78% of the county's population. Including Enniscorthy as a key town brings County Wexford's percentage of representation up to 27.65%.

Enniscorthy can be added as a stand-alone town on its merits. The town has a population greater than 10,000. Enniscorthy is growing and it does not fall within the catchment area of any other town or city. Three key towns proposed recorded falls in their populations between the 2011 and 2016 censuses:

Clonmel (*17,908 to 17,140*);

Clonakilty (*4,721 to 4,592*);

Dungarvan (*9,427 to 9,227*).

The draft report includes three key towns in County Tipperary, namely Thurles, Nenagh and Clonmel. Wexford has a well-balanced distribution of population settlements and to capture a sufficient proportion of the population of County Wexford under future urban development, the three largest towns in the county should be included.

Disproportionate County Distribution relative to population of Towns included.

(See Appendix 3)

- ❖ **Development Ready.** Enniscorthy has only just had a new €16M Waste Water Treatment Plant installed which allows for a population growth from the current 11,381 to 26,000 and in the last 6 months planning for over 400 houses in schemes of 90+ houses have been granted with one such scheme just started.

- ❖ **Connectivity.** With a Double By-Pass completing in June 2019, Enniscorthy will have a Motorway Link direct to Dublin City via the M11. It is only 40 minutes from Rosslare Europort and is on a direct link route to Rosslare for the entire Midlands and North West regions through Bunclody and Carlow (N80) linking to the M7 corridor. This may become even more important if, for example, the Brexit outcome eventually means less goods that currently land bridge from Dublin, have to switch to export through Rosslare. It is County Wexford's most connected town to the Regions, as well as to the other three County Wexford towns. It is only an hour from both Kilkenny and Waterford cities and only 40 minutes from Carlow and Arklow.



(See Map)

- ❖ **Thriving Industry and Growth:** Enniscorthy has a thriving industrial and employment base and is well positioned to grow substantially with the recently increased transport improvements and waste water treatment capacity. Enniscorthy has over 70 businesses in the old Dublin Road Industrial Park and has international trading companies such as Clearstream Technologies & Taoglas located in the town. Enniscorhty is also the home town of the IT service company Datapac and J Donoghue Motors. These are all large employers in the town. A new Technology Park is currently being developed with the capacity to create up to 1,000 job. One of the units under construction is to house a UN Centre of Excellence in the global challenge to curb emissions-one of only three Worldwide.

(See Appendix 4)

- ❖ **Tourism Destination.** Enniscorthy enjoys an enviable Tourism product and sits right in the heart of a vibrant County Tourism Sector. In its own right it is steeped in culture, being 1,500 years old, sited in the Slaney River valley, wedged in between Historical Vinegar Hill (recently awarded the official title of a Battlefield Site) and the Norman Enniscorthy Castle, with quaint historical shop-fronted narrow streets carved into the hillside town. Enniscorthy is a hugely popular tourism destination because of its equal accessibility to the towns of Wexford, Carlow and Wicklow and the cities of Kilkenny and Waterford, as well as to the numerous world class beaches Wexford has to offer. It being the setting for three feature films the most recent being 'Brooklyn', captures many visitor's imagination also.

❖ Wexford lies in fifth place in attracting domestic tourism numbers and Enniscorthy is in the heart of the visitor's experience. It has 3 hotels, two bustling Town hotels, both of which have expanded substantially over the last five years, Treacy's Hotel has expanded from 60 to 78 rooms with planning being sought for more rooms and The Riverside Park Hotel has expanded from 60 to 100 rooms. Monart Destination Spa Hotel is an International Award winning Spa and is ranked in the World's top five for its offering in spa treatments. These combine to provide 248 hotel bedrooms and deliver in excess of 135,000 sleepers in Enniscorthy as well as a very strong food offering throughout the town and hinterland.

❖ **Vibrant International Festivals.**

Enniscorthy's Festival scene is vibrant and dynamic and many of the festivals have attracted huge numbers and acted as a catalyst to developing all year round visitors. In 3 years the Rockin' Food Festival has delivered in excess of 120,000 visitors. It was the catalyst for the development of Taste Wexford a county wide initiative that is delivering International visitors, supporting the agri food sector and creating new jobs. With 3 new food



tourism attractions opening in Enniscorthy The Strawberry + Roots Festival is the second longest Festival in Ireland after the International Rose of Tralee. The Blackstairs Blues Festival is now in its 25th year, as Irelands leading Blues event and Wexford Literary Festival continues to showcase Enniscorthy and the region to national and international audiences.

❖ **Further Tourism Expansion Plans - Iconic Attraction.** In the County Council's development plans for Enniscorthy, they have acknowledged one of Enniscorthy's USPs as being its Historical and Cultural Heritage as well as its picturesque setting and have confirmed a plan to make Enniscorthy Castle and the nearby Athenaeum Hall a game changing national visitor attraction. The plan is to develop and market the historic town of Enniscorthy as a must see destination in the Ancient East region, Ireland & Europe. The Expansion plans for this entire zone will bring it to a level of attraction that will rival Kilkenny Castle for visitor numbers, etc. The plans include creating stunning first impressions of Enniscorthy and delivering unique experiences that

capture local distinctiveness encouraging visitors to stay longer and visit all year round.

(See Appendix 5)

- ❖ **Culture and Literary.** Enniscorthy is a town of great cultural and literary repute. It is the home town of Colm Toibin, one of the World's best known authors and the late Anthony A.J. Cronin, a poet of international standing. Enniscorthy is also home to the late Eileen Gray, the famed Architect and Designer whose works are to be found in museums throughout the World. Enniscorthy has a vibrant Literary Festival which attracts writers from across the Globe.

(See Appendix 6)

- ❖ **Sporting Enniscorthy.** Enniscorthy town is renowned for its sports offering to locals and visitors alike. Enniscorthy caters for practically every sport ranging from field games to the more leisurely pursuit of boules. It has a strong sports offering for all age groups and for the sports minded. Enniscorthy is an ideal place to live, play and relax.

(See Appendix 7)



Enniscorthy and District Chamber of Commerce is very proud of the quality of life the town has to offer and with a defined identity, along with the said requirements as outlined in this submission, we believe that Enniscorthy can and will reach its full potential to successfully attract and retain businesses.

APPENDIX 1:

- ❖ The Enniscorthy Flood Relief Scheme combines a number of measures to prevent flooding in the town. These include river channel widening, river deepening, bridge relocation and the construction of extensive glass panelled flood walls throughout Enniscorthy Town.



- ❖ The Enniscorthy Main Drainage Scheme aims to extend the existing Waste Water Treatment Plant at St. John's, one mile from the town centre, and decommission the Killagoley WWTP when the capacity is sufficient. The Scheme was subject to a full EIA and NIS and contain robust policies and objectives to ensure protection of water quality.
- ❖ The M11 Gorey to Enniscorthy By-Pass Scheme includes major roadworks and bypass development of the M11/N11 roads around Enniscorthy. The bypass, presently nearing completion, was subject to full EIA and NIS inspections.
- ❖ The Scheme comprises of a new motorway from the end of the Gorey Bypass at Clogh to the townland of Scurlockbush, South of Enniscorthy. The Scheme also includes a bypass of the N30 to the West of Enniscorthy and a link road to the N80.

APPENDIX 2:

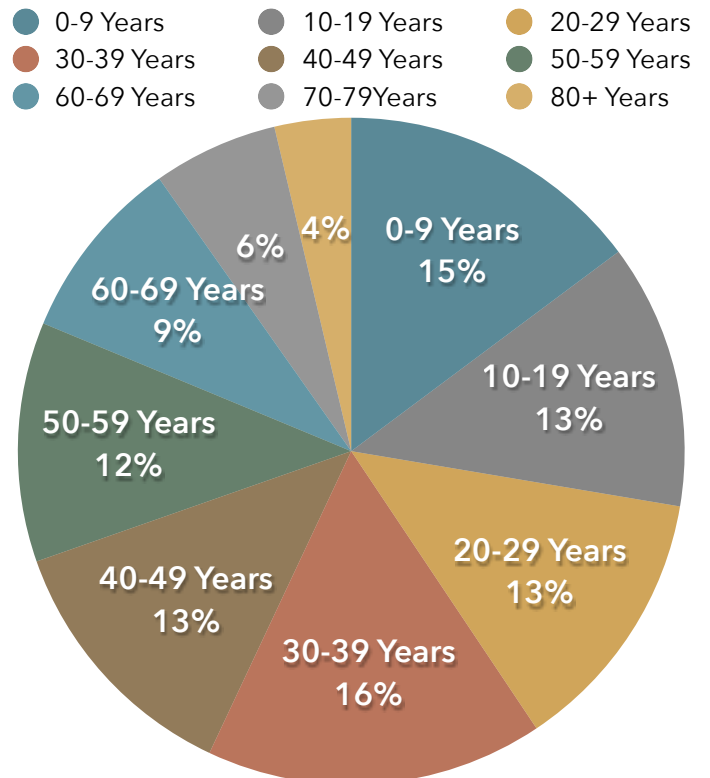
The population of Enniscorthy has grown in every published census figures since 1991.

1991 Census: Population 7,640
 1996 Census: Population 7,655
 2002 Census: Population 8,964
 2006 Census: Population 9,538
 2011 Census: Population 10,838
 2016 Census: Population 11,381



Enniscorthy’s population is evenly divided between males and females with the latest census figures showing females outnumbered males by just 411 (5,896 females - 5,485 males). The age distribution also makes for interesting comparison and clearly shows Enniscorthy with a younger than average population:

With a population figure of 7,925 under the age of 50, Enniscorthy will require substantial investment in the coming years to sustain employment and with the growth rate in population likely to continue, it is essential the town be included in the proposed spatial strategy for the Eastern Region.



APPENDIX 3:

- ❖ The draft report notes falls in the population of three towns ear-marked for inclusion in the Spatial Development Plan between the 2011 and 2016 censuses - CLONMEL 17,908 to 17,140, CLONAKILTY 4,721 to 4,592 and DUNGARVAN 9,427 to 9,227.
- ❖ Comparatively, County Wexford's key towns represent the lowest percentage of representation based on metropolitan areas and key towns. Wexford and Gorey combined represent 20.04% of the County's population whereas Kilkenny city represents 26.78% of the entire county's population. Including Enniscorthy as a key town will bring County Wexford's percentage of representation up to 27.65% which will still be lower than County Kilkenny's representation given the difference in population figures.

POPULATION ANALYSIS:

KILKENNY CITY - 26.747%

Kilkenny city 26,512: Kilkenny county 99,118.

CARLOW - 42.633%

Carlow town 24,272: Carlow county 56,932.

WEXFORD: 20.04%

Wexford town 21,188: Wexford county 149,722.

- ❖ With a population of over 11,000 and with a huge hinterland stretching from the Blackstairs Mountain range to the sea shore at Ballyconniger, Enniscorthy town should and must be included in the Spatial Plan as it will allow for greater representation of the overall County's population and, more importantly, the town does not fall within the catchment area of any other town in the county.
- ❖ The draft report includes three key town in County Tipperary namely Thurles, Nenagh and Clonmel. Tipperary County has a population of just 9,811 more than County Wexford but two of the included towns have smaller populations than Enniscorthy, while Clonmel's population fell according to the last census figures.
- ❖ Enniscorthy can be added as a stand alone town on its merits. Its population is growing and because of its central location within the county, to exclude it will leave a large geographical spread without any representation in the proposed new plan.

APPENDIX 4:

Enniscorthy's new Technology Park, an initiative of Wexford County Council, is currently under construction at Killagoley, Enniscorthy, just a mile from the centre of the town. The site has been nominated as a World Centre of Excellence by the United Nations, one of only three such centres worldwide, and will serve as headquarters for the other two Centres of Excellence in Vancouver, Canada, and New York in the United States.



The U.N. will open a special office in one of the planned two 50,000 sq. ft. buildings to be erected on the 38 acre site and they will be joined on campus by a representative office from Penn State University, Philadelphia, and a similar office from the University of Savannah, Georgia.



Penn State University is recognised as the leading university worldwide in energy conservation matters and their interest in establishing an office in the new Technology Park, alongside the World Centre of Excellence office of the United Nations, is a clear indication of the influence the new technology park will play in the future of energy conservation

going forward.

The Passive House Energy Conservation Healthy Living System of house building has now been adopted as standard in the United States, and in Europe Passive Housing and nZEB (Nearly Zero Energy Buildings) has now also been adopted by the EU as the way forward in future construction projects.



Ireland is Passive House and nZEB compliant for all new commercial and public buildings since December 31^{st.}, 2018 and with agreement in place, will adopt similar standards for all other types of construction, including house building, from December 31^{st.}, 2020. Both 50,000 sq. ft., buildings earmarked for the new Technology Park will be constructed in full compliance of Passive and nZEB standards having been designed by Mosart Architects, of Enniscorthy and Rathdrum, County Wicklow

Monart's Managing Director, Tomas O Leary, recently certified as compliant, America's tallest Passive building, a 27 storey construction outside New York City.

The Technology Park, when completed has the potential to create upwards of 1,000 jobs, and will be promoted as a centre for the up-skilling of construction workers from both at home and abroad. It can and, in time, will become the 'Silicone Valley' of air cleanliness and energy efficiency in Ireland.



APPENDIX 5:

ROCKIN' FOOD FESTIVAL:

The Rockin' Food Festival, incorporating the 10th, Rock and Roll Town Festival, is now in its 5th, year and is rightly regarded as Ireland's premier food offering. Winner of the 'Best Festival' at the 2018 South East Radio Hospitality Awards, the Festival was also nominated for two National LAMA Awards (best Arts/Culture and Best Tourism Initiative). It consists of over 80 outdoor food and craft outlets, cookery demonstrations etc., and 30 plus Rock 'n' Roll gigs on various locations throughout the town.



Last year it attracted more than 100,000 visitors to Enniscorthy over the 3 days of the August Bank Holiday weekend.

STRAWBERRY ROOTS:

Is an integral part of the Strawberry Fair which has been a feature of the Summer programme of entertainment in Enniscorthy since 1967. The Fair, now the second oldest festival in Ireland after the Rose of Tralee Festival, takes place over the June Bank Holiday weekend and signals the start of the Summer and tourist season in Enniscorthy. It specialises in featuring the best possible outdoor entertainment and some of Ireland's biggest acts have played at the Strawberry Fair over the years. It is a family fun filled festival and attracts visitors both from at home and abroad,

BLACKSTAIRS BLUES FESTIVAL:

Takes place in September each year and is this year celebrating its 25th anniversary as Ireland's leading blues event. The best of local, national and international blues bands are featured and for one magical weekend in September each year, Enniscorthy becomes the 'Blues Capital' of the World.



WEXFORD LITERARY FESTIVAL:

Inspires, encourages, connects and promotes new and existing Wexford writers, poets, playwrights and filmmakers and showcases them to a national and international audience.

The Festival attracts would be writers from all over Ireland and abroad to Enniscorthy and affords them the opportunity of sampling the town's literary talents, Enniscorthy's proud history and the town's beautiful and icon venues such as Enniscorthy Castle, The Athenaeum, The Library and the Presentation Arts Centre to name but a few.

It brings international status to the town attracting writers, poets, playwrights and filmmakers from around the Globe to participate and contribute to our:

Colm Toibin International Short Story Award.

Anthony Cronin International Poetry Award.

Billy Roche International One Act Drama Award.

When it comes to culture, tourism and music, Enniscorthy boxes well above its weight - and long may it be so.



Colm Toibin



Anthony Cronin

SANTA'S ENCHANTED CASTLE

Award winning Christmas experience that delivers over 5K visitors and 900 room nights to Enniscorthy in low season. There is a great opportunity to expand this Christmas experience further with the new Enniscorthy Castle development in the future.

APPENDIX 6:

Culturally, Enniscorthy can hold its own with any town of comparable size in Ireland. Its long association with cultural activities dates back to the early years of the last century when Michael MacLiammoir and Hilton Edwards, founders of the Gate Theatre in Dublin and doyens of the theatrical world, first met on the stairs of the Athenaeum Theatre in Enniscorthy. Their long association with Irish theatre can be traced back to that faithful meeting with MacLiammoir on record as saying that “but for a chance meeting in Enniscorthy, Hilton and myself might never have decided to settle in Ireland”.

Enniscorthy is proud of its connection to the two great men of Irish theatre and literature and proud also of the fact that two of the great men of literature and poetry, Colm Toibin and Anthony AJ Cronin are ‘Sons of Enniscorthy’ a fact often reflected in their writings and poetry.

Another Enniscorthy claim to fame is that the town is the birthplace of the World famous Eileen Gray, Architect and Designer of fine furniture. Her works are now displayed in the great museums of the world and design pieces created by Eileen Gray have sold for a staggering €20 million at auction in America.

William Henry Grattan Flood, a prolific author, historian and musicologist resided in Enniscorthy from 1895 until his death in 1928.

Enniscorthy Theatre Group holds the record of being the only amateur drama group to win back to back All Ireland Drama Finals, having won a staggering four titles in total. The group also has the unique distinction of being the only Irish drama group to win All England and All Wales Drama titles, a feat they achieved on three consecutive occasions and for which they were honoured by Creathon University in Omaha, Nebraska, by being invited to participate in their ‘American studies of Irish Literature’ Programme.

Enniscorthy is the hometown of famed songster Wallis Bird while Maria Doyle Kennedy, singer and actress, lived in Enniscorthy as a child.

APPENDIX 7:

- ❖ Enniscorthy is perhaps unique in sporting terms in that every possible sport is catered for in some of the best facilities available. Apart from the major sports i.e. Gaelic games, rugby, soccer etc., the town also has an abundance of clubs catering for the needs of all sports enthusiasts of every genre. Enniscorthy's indoor swimming pool and fitness centre is the envy of many other towns of similar size while fitness enthusiasts are catered for in clubs evenly spread throughout the town, each with its own personal trainer.
- ❖ The town has a very active hockey club which caters for all age groups and which participates in various Leinster Leagues with conspicuous success.
- ❖ Similarly, Enniscorthy Rugby Club is recognised as the leading Junior Rugby Club in Leinster and has won a number of Provincial Town Cups and All-Ireland Junior Leagues in recent seasons. It has a number of floodlit pitches and a very spacious clubhouse.
- ❖ Enniscorthy Hurling and Football Club competes at senior level in the County Championships as well as fielding teams in all grades at under age, junior and intermediate level. Its pitches at Bellefield are floodlit and its clubhouse is used for various social and cultural activities on a nightly basis.
- ❖ Perhaps the "Jewel in the Crown" of sporting endeavours in Enniscorthy is the new Sports Hub at Ross Road which caters for athletes of all ages. Its 8 lane athletic track is the only one of its kind in County Wexford and the only one also in Leinster outside of Dublin. It hosts regular athletic meetings and is of national/international standard.
- ❖ Greyhound racing is another sporting pastime in Enniscorthy with the town being only one of 9 in Ireland to have its own race track. Meetings are held twice weekly during the racing season and attracts punters from across the South East and further afield.
- ❖ Hillbrook Lawn Tennis Club hosts the County Wexford Lawn Tennis Championships each year and is recognised for the professional manner with which the club is run. It boasts 5 tennis courts, three all-weather and two grass courts, with Hillbrook also having excellent recreational facilities.
- ❖ Enniscorthy Golf Club is an 18 hole championship course and draws golfing enthusiasts from all over Ireland during the summer season. Its facilities are among the best on the golfing circuit and the club is a major contributor to tourism in County Wexford.
- ❖ Practically all recognised sports and pastimes are catered for in Enniscorthy with the town having an abundance of sporting facilities from floodlit and all weather pitches to indoor soccer pitches and night time sporting activities