

## Business diversity across Waterford



We attended the Waterford Chamber of Commerce Business awards on Friday last week and were very impressed with the range and diversity of business throughout the city and county.

Dungarvan and Waterford Chambers linked up for this event held at the Tower Hotel, which proved a resounding success. The awards also served to illustrate just how many businesses have begun to prosper from the delivery of the Waterford Greenway in locations like Kilmacthomas and Dungarvan. This success is also being noted by Kilkenny County Council when it comes to the 24 kilometre Greenway it intends to develop between Ferrybank and New Ross.

Dungarvan has become a serious player in the tourism sector. One of the early starters in boosting the town's profile over the past two decades has been Paul Flynn of the Tannery

Restaurant. The well-known chef gave a fine interview at the ceremony, recalling how he kicked things off in the old Tannery building at a time when Dungarvan didn't have a strong tourism product like today nor a particularly great name for dining out. But that has now spectacularly changed, which caterer Eunice Power's success and the development of a range of eateries on Davitt's Quay also bears testament to.

It was also great to learn of the Coach House's ongoing success in Kilmacthomas, arguably the biggest dining out/snacking winner in the development of the Waterford Greenway.

Owners Stephen Lynch and Craig Dee spoke frankly about getting the business off the ground and how they've learned more on the job and developed their commercial acumen in manner impossible to replicate in any educational setting. Among the other Dungarvan success stories, we noted GSK's corporate social responsibility brief, and the manner in which they assist local schools with particular interest. While several Tramore businesses also featured strongly at last Friday's awards, Sanofi emerged as Overall Winners. They produce world class products from their city base and are key supporters of the Crystal Valley Tech initiative and the drive for Technological University status.

The care sector also had a good showing in the city through Havenwood while the Dolphin family's health care call centre which serves American hospitals was another unique story. If you were from outside Waterford and noted everything that's going on across Waterford, one could only be impressed at our business offering.

Confidence in the future, despite the dreaded unknown of Brexit was also stressed by many business, and it was a pleasure to learn of the ongoing success of Dawn Meats and Ardkeen Stores - so well done to all.

There seemed to be a strong can-do attitude among the guests at the event and many spoke optimistically about the potential for future job growth.

One area where Waterford could undoubtedly shine more in is retail and we would love to see the city centre performing better than it currently is. Parking and access have been regular recent complaints that have come our way. It gets very quiet after dark along our shopping streets and we clearly need a more lively evening offering. A review is needed on why that people do not use the city centre more is needed so perhaps a major independent retail survey would be worth conducting. Winter and Spraoi both bring in the crowds, but we need something else on a year-round basis to entice more people into the city centre - and for longer. No doubt there'll be more food for thought on this question over the coming months.