



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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JACKSONVILLE FLORIDA BUSINESSES VISIT ATLANTIC WAY

Plans to forge commercial links between the Atlantic Way region and one of the most successful business areas in the world have been announced by **The Atlantic Way**.

The Atlantic Way, a pioneering organisation comprised of key-decision makers in the West, will host an important delegation from the Jacksonville/Northeast Florida business community from June 18-20.

The purpose of the visit is to grow business between the two economic communities, and give impetus towards creating in the West of Ireland a globally recognised region of excellence for living, leisure, knowledge and work.

Over the past three years the Atlantic Way has engaged in in-depth discussions with key decision-makers in business, in statutory organisations and with community activists in the West, as well as with a government liaison group, to chart a new regional approach to planning and roll-out of all developmental structures. The Atlantic Way has pioneered an agreed coordinated approach for every aspect of new infrastructure, living, working and developing a combined marketing strategy for the people, the local authorities and the business communities of the two contiguous regions of the West and the Mid-West.

Members of the Atlantic Way include some of the largest Irish-based multinationals including Hewlett Packard, Analog Devices, Cook Group Europe, GECAS and Olympus. Among the member organisations are Local Government, including the Cross Departmental Committee, Government Agencies, IDA, Enterprise Ireland, Shannon Development, Mid West and West Regional Authorities, Local Authorities, Shannon Airport Authority, the two Universities in Limerick and Galway, Limerick Institute of Technology, Galway Mayo Institute, the Chambers of Commerce, tourism centres and hotels and many others.

The City of Jacksonville is the economic driver for the seven-county, Northeast Florida area of approximately 1.4 million residents. The region has a very diverse business sector with advanced manufacturing, aviation and aerospace, finance and insurance services, life science, and logistics and distribution as its key sectors. Jacksonville is home to Vistakon and Medtronic, well-known U.S. companies with a significant presence in Limerick and Galway.

According to Mr. Brian O'Connell, Chairperson of The Atlantic Way, "The upcoming visit forms part of The Atlantic Way's overall efforts to establish strong alliances and co-operation between both locations with the intention of creating a region of

excellence for future economic and social growth here in Ireland along the Atlantic corridor”.

“We will be facilitating a series of in-depth presentations and conversations between Atlantic Way SME’s, who are seeking to expand and export to the US, and the Jacksonville delegation. We are keen to agree on a number of specific projects to kick-start the new relationships economically, and I can assure you that special emphasis will be placed on the benefits of the Atlantic Way region as a suitable location”, he added.

Mr. O’Connell explained that there has been a series of visits and interactions between The Atlantic Way and key decision makers in the Jacksonville area over the past 12 months. He continued, “Atlantic Way believes the Jacksonville/Northeast Florida region is a global leader in its business structure, operations and promotion for its economic community. Similar adjacent cities internationally have combined to create corridors of commercial success and technological creativity. We know we can do the same here in Ireland and see the catalyst for the region as being its Cities and their conurbation i.e. critical mass. Limerick City now has a good opportunity to master plan its future breathing life back into its city centre which will be spear headed by the Government’s implementation of the Fitzgerald Report on the regeneration programme of the city. In addition to this, will be the opportunities of the Limerick Docklands and the Shannon Estuary which all have great potential for trans-shipment and freight logistics. Our vision is for the 1.5million people of the Atlantic Way region to be established as a world-class region in every aspect of living, leisure and knowledge by 2020. Starting now”

Mr. O’Connell noted that there had been a major shift internationally towards economic communities promoting their regional potential, rather than the opportunities of individual companies. “From a financial point of view it makes perfect sense to promote all potential prospects of the economic community, at the same time and with the same budget. The Atlantic Way has also recognised that the economic aspect is no longer the sole selling point of any community, because the educational, social, health, leisure, the environment, housing, infrastructure, tourism and cultural aspects are all the other vital jig-saw pieces, that comprise each community, and they must be included”, he stated.

During their 3-day trip to the Region the Jacksonville/Northeast Florida delegation will visit Counties Limerick, Clare and Galway. Key movers and decision-makers will be introduced to SME’s from Jacksonville, who are seeking to establish a presence in the Atlantic Way region, giving them a beachhead to European markets and beyond. Both teams will discuss collaboration in different research and development projects

Commenting ahead of the upcoming visit, Cornerstone’s International Department Director Michael Breen pointed out that the Jacksonville/Northeast Florida region’s experience in forging public/private partnerships to achieve economic development

goals had become a benchmark for communities looking to enhance their economic growth.

He added, “The visit is seen as an opportunity for communities in the Atlantic Way region to learn from and partner with Jacksonville’s experience and for us to do the same with them.”

Mr. Breen confirmed that the delegation would also be keen to possibly develop specific ties between Shannon Airport and Jacksonville’s International Airport and Cecil Aviation and Commerce Centre, the 6,000-acre facility rapidly developing into a major logistics and aviation hub for the Southeastern U.S. “From Jacksonville’s perspective, this visit represents the enhancement of initial business ties that will hopefully lead to direct business-to-business relationships, including expansion into each region’s communities generating new jobs and economic growth”, he concluded.

The City’s elected Mayor, the Honourable John Peyton, will head the Jacksonville delegation. He will be joined by senior executives from regional economic development organizations including Cornerstone Regional Development Partnership, the Jacksonville Regional Chamber of Commerce, the Jacksonville Economic Development Commission, the Clay County Chamber of Commerce, and the Nassau County Economic Development Board.

For more on The Atlantic Way visit www.atlanticway.com.

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Notes to Editor:

Brian O’Connell is available for interview and further comment. To arrange an interview with Brian O’Connell please contact Mark Dunphy of Dunphy PR on 086-8534900 or media@dunphypr.com