

## **Background & History**

Kantoher Development Group (KDG) can trace its origins back to 1904 when Kantoher Creamery was set up as a local co-operative to provide sustainable employment for the community by utilising what was then the most abundant natural resource in the area, grass! The leaders of the cooperative developed & grew the business with local farmers through the processing and sales of milk, the manufacture and creation of markets for cream, cheese, butter and casein. Through diversification the cooperative developed new opportunities for its suppliers by providing processing facilities for pigs, turkeys, ducks and later poultry. By the mid-sixties and seventies, it was one of the most progressive co-ops in the country and was the base from which Killeedy parish and the surrounds grew.

By 1991, Kantoher Creamery was taken over by Kerry Group who then grew the business further. However, in 2005, Kerry decided to close the processing operation & the poultry plant. This resulted in the loss of over 250 jobs directly and a further 500 indirectly.

Rather than objecting to the closure, Kantoher Development Group (KDG) was founded & the group worked with Kerry Group to achieve the best outcome possible for Kantoher & Killeedy. This included the donation of some assets by Kerry Group including the site of the now Enterprise Centre & other sites within the business park.

## **Today**

Today, Kantoher is again a thriving business base in the community with up to six companies operating out of the site providing over 80 jobs directly and another 40 indirectly and an ambition by KDG to grow this to 200 jobs by 2020.

The companies now based there include:

- **BHSL** has grown a business out of a new local resource from the now thriving poultry industry, poultry manure. Through its innovative fluidised bed technology it has avoided the negative environmental impact of over-land spreading locally by putting its automated plants on site, recovering the energy from the manure to provide heat and electricity to the energy intense poultry production process and thereby avoid the need to import large

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Kantoher Development Group, Kantoher Business Park, Kantoher, Ballagh, Co. Limerick  
(087) 114 2048 [patricia@kantoherdevelopmentgroup.com](mailto:patricia@kantoherdevelopmentgroup.com)

CRO: 431933 Directors: C Deely, M Magner Flynn, J Kelleher, J O'Connor, M Keating

tonnages of fossil fuel. Local employees based here remotely operate these plants that are now operating as far away as UK, Uruguay and USA.

- **Mick McMahon Ecofuels** has grown its business out of another local resource, the thinnings and residues from the now significant forestry industry with up to 6,000 acres of trees planted locally. This business processes the wood to supply wood briquettes to heat local homes and also bales shavings for the major local poultry industry.
- **Tara Cladding** has its origins through the supply of cladding for the building needs of the local farming community but has since grown the business where it has, most recently, built the first bus shelters with automatic battery recharging for the Stockholm city electric power bus fleet! Its business has grown as a niche supplier of specialised design and engineering of steel cladding buildings and frames
- **Strand Foods** was a new business that grew out of the closure of the Kantoher and Castlemahon chicken poultry processing facilities. The business now prepares and processes locally grown chicken to be sold onto to the catering businesses in the region.
- **Mary Barrett Veterinary** is a veterinary practice that provides for the welfare of animals and poultry of the local community.
- **MEHS** is an environmental group that provides consultancy and planning services.
- **FAS** which is also based in Kantoher provides employment to over 12 people to carry out much of the local work required to keep our villages, community and graveyard maintained in good condition.
- The local water group, **Killeedy Group Water Scheme**, have now based their headquarters in the offices at Kantoher.

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## **Bioeconomy Centre**

With these operations growing annually there is a momentum in the locality & KDG now see an opportunity to grow Kantoher & Killeedy further by focusing once more on potential opportunities generated by the abundance of natural resources in the local area & surrounds. KDG believe that Kantoher can become a central hub to facilitate these opportunities.

Kantoher Development Group's mission statement is:

*"To create an environment that promotes sustainable employment in the whole community"*

In order to create the sustainable long-term jobs needed to achieve our mission, KDG need to look at the resources that are available locally: land, wood, miscanthus, peat, locally produced food : meat, milk, fruit, veg, honey etc. These resources need to be harvested & processed & converted into tangible employment.

The "BioEconomy" is borne from rural areas. However, the businesses that establish themselves in the rural locations such as Killeedy, working in bio industries need clear routes to market for their products. Centres such as Kantoher Business Park need to be supported in their endeavors to provide the infrastructure to allow such bioeconomy based businesses to access these markets.

Supports such as low-cost production/office space, information, mentoring & access to funding are vital to help these businesses grow. Strengthened links between third level institutions & centres such as Kantoher will also be critical in ensuring the further development of any bioeconomy. Academia play a pivotal role in the development of the bioeconomy through their research & scientific/technical developments in this area. It is essential that such research be fed back to the industry & Kantoher can act as the vehicle for this research to be disseminated & also to coordinate collaborations between industry & the third level institutions.

For these supports & links to become a reality in Kantoher, it is imperative that the relevant state & local bodies get behind KDG in particular in supporting the following three bioeconomy based projects.

### **Project 1: Reedbed Sewage System**

KDG are spearheading a project to have a reedbed sewage system constructed on a 2-acre site owned by the community approx. 1km away from Kantoher Business Park.

The reedbed system is essential to allow the continued development & growth of Kantoher Business Park. The current sewage infrastructure in the business park is below standard: existing of a domestic septic tank system with sewage being tanked back into Newcastle West on a regular basis.

Not only will this reedbed solve a problem in terms of tackling the sewage infrastructure in the park but it will do so in a way that has a low environmental impact & is sustainable.

This project is also revitalising an existing, derelict eyesore. There are further plans to upgrade the surrounding park lands into a community amenity.

### ***KDG Submissions/Requests based on Project 1***

- As this is the remediation of an existing rural site, KDG feel the reedbed system should be prioritised over other conventional mechanised sewage systems.
- All associated auxiliary costs (pipeworks, engineer fees etc.) should be eligible for financial supports at either local or national level.
- On – going maintenance of the site should be taken on by the council and/or Irish Water.

### **Project 2: Mini District Heating System**

KDG are currently examining how a mini district heating scheme in the business park could potentially work in reducing energy costs for the businesses in the park whilst simultaneously having a low environmental impact.

***KDG Submissions/Requests based on Project 2***

- Planning permission of any new housing schemes should include provision for a district heating system.
- The use of local biomass fuel sources in district heating systems should be supported & incentivised.

**Project 3: Community Wind Turbine**

KDG are also investigating the potential for a small community turbine (approx. 500kw) to harness the power of the high wind speeds (8/9 metres a second) and grid connectivity which is available through the many turbines that are already operating in the mountainous hinterland. This turbine would have the potential to generate energy for the community with any surplus going back to the grid to generate a profit which would be funded back into the local community.

***KDG Submissions/Requests based on Project 3***

- Financial support, incentives for community groups to establish wind turbines in their area.
- Allow communities to bypass the current grid connection queues (ahead of commercial entities)

**Other Submissions/ Requests**

KDG feel that the erection of solar & wind farms by commercial entities should be legally obliged to adhere to the following:

- A percentage of the turnover of the farm should be returned as an annual levy to the community.
- Formal engagement by farm owners with the community prior to the planning permission stage.