

**MINUTES of the 4<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE  
BORDER, MIDLAND AND WESTERN  
REGIONAL OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME 2014-2020  
MONITORING COMMITTEE**

**Held In The  
Salthill Hotel, Galway on  
November 28<sup>th</sup> 2017**

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**ATTENDANCE:** (See attached)

**INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME**

The Chairperson of the BMW Regional OP Monitoring Committee, Mr. David Minton, Managing Authority, presided.

Mr. Minton opened the meeting and welcomed the committee members to the fourth meeting of the Border, Midland and Western Regional Operational Programme Monitoring Committee for the programme period 2014-2020.

Mr. Minton informed the members that the meeting was taking a thematic approach to explore the impact and value of the Regional OP, particularly in the SME competitiveness sector. He explained that the invited guest speakers at the meeting included recipients of support through the ROP and thanked them for sharing their stories.

**1. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

The Agenda was **ADOPTED** and **AGREED** by all

**2. ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES OF THE BMW REGIONAL OP MONITORING COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 7<sup>th</sup> June 2017**

Ms. Merja Toikka, EU Commission, stated that she had some minor amendments to make to the minutes which she would discuss later with the Managing Authority.

**Proposed by** Ms. Anne Marie Caulfield

**Seconded by** Mr. Terry Dunne

*“That the Minutes of the BMW Regional OP Monitoring Committee Meeting of the 7<sup>th</sup> June 2017 be adopted, subject to proposed amendments by Ms. Toikka, EU Commission”*

The Minutes of the BMW Regional OP Monitoring Committee Meeting of the 7<sup>th</sup> June 2017, subject to proposed amendments by Ms. Toikka, EU Commission, were **ADOPTED** and **AGREED** by all.

### 3. NWRA UPDATE

Mr. David Minton, Managing Authority, explained that the combination of the PMC Meeting and the NWRA conference which was being held after the meeting was about focussing on the success of the west and north west of Ireland especially in relation to entrepreneurship, innovation and the success of the ROP. He explained that the PMC meeting would lead into the conference and invited all the members to attend the conference in the afternoon.

Mr. Minton informed the members that the strategy of the NWRA over the next year is focussed on three strong pillars; *Better Places, Competitiveness and Collaboration*. He pointed out that the NWRA website would be launched at the conference and explained that this website is a platform for celebrating everything that is positive about the Regional OP and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES).

Mr. Minton also informed the members of the European Entrepreneurial Region (EER) application which was successful and stated that the NWRA was now designated the EER for 2018. This will bring together a partnership of over 130 companies, including Enterprise Ireland, Local Enterprise Offices, IDA, Local Authorities and other public and private partnerships, to retain the title for 2018 and celebrate and promote the region as the most resilient entrepreneurial region in Europe. He explained that the NWRA is the national contact point for the Interreg Atlantic Area Programme and the Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme and highlighted the delivery of funding under these programmes into the region.

Mr. Minton reported on the key role that the Regional Assembly plays in the National Planning Framework which was launched earlier in the year and development of Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES) and invited the members to get involved in the development of this strategy. He also outlined the regional initiative which the Assembly is involved regarding the Atlantic Economic Corridor (AEC) programme. He stated that NWRA chairs an infrastructural group and also takes a lead role in the communications of this programme. A short video was presented to the members in relation to the work which is ongoing under the AEC programme.

In conclusion, Mr. Minton informed the meeting that a total €32m was declared under the ROP this year and he acknowledged the support and work of the Intermediate Bodies in reaching this target.

Ms. Caitlín Conneely, Managing Authority, gave a brief update on the following issues and outlined the progress to date.

#### **Final Implementation Report 2007-2013 OP**

Ms. Conneely informed the members that the Final Implementation Report for the 2007-2013 programme was submitted to the Commission on the 30th March 2017. A formal response to a number of queries raised by the Commission was submitted via the SFC on the 29th September and the amended Final Implementation Report was resubmitted on 30th September. She reported that the Commission have informed the Managing Authority that the BMW Closure Letter is being prepared with a view to receiving it in December. Ms. Conneely thanked the Intermediate Bodies and the

Certifying Authority for all their assistance in providing the additional information required to compile this response to the Commission.

### **Annual Implementation Report 2014-2020 OP**

Ms. Conneely stated that the 2016 Annual Implementation Report was produced based on progress reports and information agreed at the PMC meeting held on 7th June 2017. She stated that the 2016 AIR was transmitted to the Commission via the SFC on the 30th June 2017 and was accepted by the Commission on the 10th August 2017.

### **Article 112 Regulation update**

In relation to Art 112 Ms. Conneely informed the members that the required information was submitted to the Commission on the 27th October 2017 detailing spend and committed figures to the end of September 2017. To the end of September 2017, spend and committed figures total €187m which is 59 % of the OP total.

### **E-Cohesion**

Ms. Conneely outlined the following in relation to E-Cohesion

- Phase 1 of eCohesion is now live and the system is available to beneficiaries to enter declarations and upload data.
- Phase 2 is currently at UAT stage and focus testing is currently taking place with a release date of 24th November.
- Phase 3 requirements are currently being clarified and confirmed. The release date is 20th December.

She informed the members that training for the ERDF beneficiaries and IBs will take place in January 2018 and that all users will be moved onto the eCohesion system in early 2018.

### **Financial Drawdown**

In relation to Financial Drawdown Ms. Conneely reported the following:

#### ***Already declared (June 2017)***

Priority 4: Low Carbon Economy- Better Energy Warmer Homes €7,069,626

#### ***Position at November/December 2017 - Anticipated declarations***

##### Priority 1: Strengthening RTDI in the BMW Region

SFI Research Centres/ Investigators Programme	€10,189,960
Industry Research & Development (Enterprise Ireland)	€ 2,145,292
Commercialisation/Innovation Partnerships	€ 639,640

##### Priority 3: SME Support, Promotion and Capability Development

Microenterprise (M2/IBYE Training)	€ 2,390,937
SME Capacity (Enterprise Ireland)	€ 3,696,978
Priority 4: Low Carbon Economy – BEWHs (Claim 2)	€ 6,214,093

Total Anticipated Declarations outstanding 2017	€25,276,900
N+3 Target for 2017	€ 8,959,324
Anticipated total declared for 2017	€32,346,526

## **Evaluations**

Ms. Conneely informed the members that The Northern & Western Regional Assembly will be carrying out a number of evaluations during 2018 which will require input from the IBs and all stakeholders.

Evaluations include the following:

### Implementation/Performance Evaluation:

- Policy and socio-economic context review;
- Monitoring data analysis;
- Interviews/Questionnaires – IBs and key stakeholders;
- Review of relevant studies and evaluations.

### Gateways Development Index:

- Refine index framework;
- Collate data from census and other official sources;
- Map revised index values.
- May be complementary to the RSES process

### Thematic Evaluations:

Thematic Evaluations may be initiated during 2018 which will be discussed in more detail at the 2018 PMC Meeting.

From 2018 onward Ms. Conneely informed the members that the Managing Authority would be focusing on raising the profile of ERDF throughout the BMW Region through a series of measures including:

- Thematic PMC Meetings
- Site visits – including, Insight Centre at NUIG; The Porterhouse; Aerogen
- Case Studies by ERDF beneficiaries
- ERDF investment in the BMW Region has created synergies for other initiatives including the European Entrepreneurial Region, Atlantic Economic Corridor etc.
- NWRA Website - redesigned to make it more user friendly and fresh which is still a work in progress and will include beneficiary listings and case studies.
- Social Media – NWRA becoming more active in social media to promote projects and beneficiaries.

In conclusion, Ms. Conneely acknowledged the work carried out by the staff of the NWRA in delivering the Operational Programme and thanked them for their support and assistance throughout the year.

Ms. Anne Marie Caulfield, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform thanked the staff of the Regional Assembly for their work over the last year and also thanked the IBs and Beneficiaries for their support and assistance. She stated that it has been an extremely busy year with work including closure of the 2007-13 programme, designation of the current programme and the N+3 achievement. She acknowledged the progress to date of the eCohesion system with the focus in 2018 on submitting claims on the system. With regard to Post 2020 Cohesion Policy she pointed out the need for simplification in the next round of ERDF funding and stated that this needs to become more streamlined with complimentarily across the funds which will then work more effectively on the ground.

Ms. Merja Toikka, EU Commission, asked for an update from the Department of Communications on the progress of the National Broadband Plan. She highlighted the need for superfast broadband with a minimum speed of 100mb per second and stated that this is what the users need going forward. Ms. Toikka complemented the Assembly on the newly revamped NWRA website and stated that it would be beneficial if there were hyperlinks to various projects and beneficiaries on the website to show what the OP has delivered.

Nuala Dormer, Department of Communications, outlined the progress under the National Broadband Plan (NBP) procurement process which is currently underway. She stated that this process is now at the detailed solution stage and explained that the Department of Communications is now evaluating these submissions with the bidders indicating a predominately fibre to the home solution in their submissions.

By the end of the process Ms. Dormer informed the members that any contracts awarded to the bidder/bidders will be a future proofed solution and will allow for the minimum broadband speed requirement to allow for an infrastructure that will deliver for everyone's needs going forward. In respect of delivery time of the NBP Ms. Dormer reported that the plan is now moving towards engagement with the two bidders in the process with several hours of dialogue and further detailed and complex negotiations on-going. In conclusion she stated that the Department of Communications expects to move to the final tender stage of the NBP in 2018.

#### **4. SME SUPPORT, PROMOTION AND CAPABILITY DEVELOPMENT IN THE BMW REGION**

##### **ENTERPRISE IRELAND**

Mr. Martin Corry, Enterprise Ireland, gave a detailed presentation on the progress of the various schemes under the ROP.

He informed the members that Enterprise Ireland is the government agency responsible for the development and growth of Irish enterprises in world markets. Enterprise Ireland works in partnership with Irish enterprise to help them start/grow/innovate and win export sales in global markets.

His presentation included the following key issues:

- **Enterprise Ireland is actively working on a number of ERDF Schemes under the OP as detailed below: -**
  - Higher Education-SME Engagement/tech transfer/business innovation:
  - Commercialisation Fund: Innovation Partnerships: New Frontiers
  - SME Advanced Research and Innovation
  - Industry Research & Development Fund: Supporting capacity of SMEs
  - Entrepreneurship and Microenterprise Theme
  
- **The Local Enterprise Office (LEO) Structure**
  
- **LEO Operations**
  - LEOs are the First Stop Shop providing advice/guidance/financial assistance for anyone wishing to start or grow a small business.
  - 31 LEOs overall with 13 LEOs located in BMW Region
  - Responsible for delivering the Entrepreneurship and Micro Enterprise Scheme (IB designation M1 M2)
  
- ***“The specific objective is to foster and grow a cohort of entrepreneurs in the BMW Region with the skills and resources to accelerate the start-up and expansion of their enterprises”***
  - promote enterprise culture and support innovative enterprises
  - business information and advice including capacity and capability building
  - mentoring and training together with financial intervention
  - networks and Protocol partners
  
- **Key Developments**
  - Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur (IBYE)
  - Student Enterprise and Female Entrepreneurship
  - Lean for Micro and LEO Innovation Investment Fund (LIIF)
  - Technical assistance for micro exporters (TAM)
  
- **Performance and Outputs 2014-2020**
  - Overall 3700 new jobs created in businesses supported by LEOs in 2016
  
- **BMW Region summary 2014-2020**
  - Expenditure and Refund target (€40m and €20m)
  - Number of enterprises supported overall 15,992
  - Number of enterprises grant aided 1,506
  - Employment increase projected in supported enterprises 3661

Mr. Corry pointed out that ERDF support through the Northern & Western Regional Assembly is critical for continued sustainable development in BMW Region and he stated that the Micro Enterprise Unit wished to acknowledge and thank the EU for their support.

## **LOCAL ENTERPRISE OFFICE GALWAY**

Ms. Breda Fox, Galway LEO, delivered a presentation on the success stories of the Galway LEO and informed the members that her presentation would focus mainly on Galway metrics and deliverables.

Firstly, she thanked Joanne Reilly from Kinvara Skincare and Peter Morrow from Skylark Attic Stairs, client companies of Galway LEO, who agreed to share their success stories with the PMC members at the meeting today.

**Her Presentation included the following key issues under Micro-Enterprise Priority:**

- **Metrics 2016**
  - Budget - €354k – Financial Supports
  - Approvals - €686k – incl Refundables
  - Total targeted jobs – 140
  - Portfolio – 243 clients / 962 jobs
  - Transfers to EI -2016 = 5 /51 jobs
  - Actual increase 79 (2016)
  
- **IBYE Programme**
  - IBYE – 2016/2017 – 128 applicants
  - To date 3 Galway clients pitched in Finals
  
- **Training**
  
- **Mentoring**
  
- **Microfinance**
  
- **Competitive Fund**
  
- **Regional Competitive Fund**

**Ms. Fox also outlined some Local Events which have taken place during the year as follows:**

- Food Producer Event (February)
- Food Fair – Halla Bia (Easter)
- Fashion Innovation awards (April)
- Brexit – 2 events ytd (March/June)
- Local Investment fund – Breakfast briefing
- Pop Up Shop (DCCOI/LEO showcase)
- Export Summit (Nov 9th)
- Local Food & Craft Fair (Nov 25th/26th)

## **KINVARA SKINCARE**

Ms. Joanne Reilly, founder and director of Kinvara Skincare, gave a presentation on the success of Kinvara Skincare and also showcased a sample of her new skincare products at the meeting.

She reported on the company's recent move to a 5,000 square foot headquarters building and the delivery of 3 new products and also reported on the €30,000 worth of products sold on line. She informed the members that Kinvara specialises in natural plant powered skincare, avoiding irritating ingredients and providing affordable products.

Ms. Reilly outlined the support and funding received from the Local Enterprise Office in Galway including mentoring and grant aid which has allowed Kinvara to meet and exceed its milestones. She reported on the various awards which Kinvara has won in Ireland and in the UK and outlined the very successful rebranding which was undertaken to allow the company to scale up and look at the export markets. This rebranding included a new website, 5 new products and the move to the new offices, which was facilitated by a business assistance grant from the LEO. She informed the members of the recent launch of an aggressive digital strategy focussing on international sales and moving from the domestic market to export market which will include the Chinese market in 2018.

Ms. Reilly's presentation included the following statistics:

	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>
<b>Sales</b>	€249,612	€433,078	€533,184	€608,692	€718,508	€1,015,520
<b>Products</b>	3	3	8	11	14	14
<b>Management</b>	1FT	1FT	1FT	1FT	2FT	2FT
<b>Marketing</b>		1FT	1FT & 2PT	2FT & 1PT	2FT & 1PT	2FT & 2PT
<b>Other Personnel</b>	1PT	2PT	2PT	1FT & 1PT	1FT & 1PT	1FT & 1PT
<b>TOTAL Employees</b>	1.5 FTE	3FTE	4FTE	5FTE	6FTE	6.5FTE

Discussion took place following Ms. Reilly's presentation on the challenges and opportunities for Kinvara Skincare, including advice for new entrepreneurs starting out in business.

Ms. Merja Toikka, EU Commission, outlined the importance of high speed broadband for business and complemented Ms. Reilly on the success of Kinvara Skincare.

## **SKYLARK ATTIC STAIRS**

Mr. Peter Morrow, Managing Director of Skylark Attic Stairs, gave a presentation on the journey of the Skylark Attic Stairs company, which included the challenges, marketing and the importance of partnerships with the Local Enterprise Office, the banks and other agents. Mr. Morrow outlined that this product is a motorised product and he outlined the design issues and challenges which the company faced in its journey to make this product acceptable to the market. He also outlined the progress and the issues with the patenting of a timber fold away electronic attic stairs

He informed the meeting that the company was set up in 2012 with the assistance of LEO funding and reported that the product was launched in 2013 at a trade show in Birmingham with the assistance of an agent. Mr. Morrow informed the members of the mistakes which were made on this journey and the challenges encountered in dealing with the various agents and reported that at the end of 2015 the company had 12 UK agents.

Mr. Morrow informed the meeting that from market research it was felt that there would be a small domestic market for this product but that it could do quite well in the UK especially with the strength of sterling. He stated that 2016 started out quite well with sales improving but as sterling began to weaken and the impact of Brexit, sales began to fall at the end of 2016 which was a very difficult time for the company.

Mr. Morrow explained that at this stage the Local Enterprise Office advised on a lean strategy programme to assist with the company's competitiveness which was very beneficial.

He explained that the company found it difficult to break into the European market due to language barriers but reported on the success of the company in the US market with a client company that was interested in the product together with the success of trade shows in the US. Because of this success the company required an expansion grant in 2017 from the LEO to meet the demand of the increased sales to the US market.

His Presentation also included the following key issues

### **Challenges**

- Market Expansion
- Financing and Logistics
- R&D and Production
- Agents and Paper Work
- After Sales Service & Support

### **Marketing**

- Awareness, Demand Generation and Enablement

### **The Importance of Partnerships**

- New Company
- Experienced in stair manufacturing and installation
- Fully electric, remote controlled Stairs with 10yr warranty
- Additional products included Balance/Surround rails and storage solutions
- Provides advice, information and support to start-ups.
- 31 dedicated teams nationwide
- Offers a wide range of experience, skills and services

Following Mr. Morrow's presentation a brief video was shown to the members on the fold away electronic attic stairs and the following issues were also discussed:

- Expansion of the Company into Europe
- Product liability issues
- Impact of Brexit on the company and Brexit proofing strategy
- Health & safety issues and new planning regulations
- Manufacturing costs in Ireland and locally sourced components for the product
- Export costs and targets going forward

## **5. Any Other Business**

Mr. David Minton, Northern & Western Regional Assembly, thanked all the speakers for their contributions to the PMC.

Cllr. Seamus Kilgannon, Northern & Western Regional Assembly, highlighted the important role of the Local Enterprise Offices in the region, particularly in the area of job creation. He suggested that additional funding should be made available to the LEO offices, especially in the west and north west due to the poor job opportunities in these regions.

Mr. Minton informed the meeting that the next PMC meeting would be held in May 2018 and stated that a date has yet to be confirmed with the details to be circulated to the members in advance of the meeting.

The foregoing minutes are confirmed

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson

\_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **ANNEX 1**

### **ATTENDANCE LIST**

#### **MANAGING AUTHORITY – Northern & Western Regional Assembly**

Mr. David Minton (Director, NWRA)

Ms. Caitlín Conneely (Assistant Director NWRA and Secretary to the Monitoring Committee)

#### **NATIONAL AUTHORITIES**

Ms. Anne Marie Caulfield      Department of Public Expenditure & Reform

Ms. Patricia Hennessy      Department of Public Expenditure & Reform

#### **INTERMEDIATE BODIES AND POLICY DEPARTMENTS**

Mr. Damien Clarke      Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

Mr. Martin Corry      Enterprise Ireland

Mr. Eugene Daly      Enterprise Ireland

Mr. David Rossitor      Science Foundation Ireland

Ms. Nuala Dormer      Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment

Ms. Siobhan Murphy      Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment

#### **REGIONAL and LOCAL INTERESTS**

Cllr. Seamus Kilgannon      Northern & Western Regional Assembly

Cllr. Christy Hyland      Northern & Western Regional Assembly

Mr. Eugene Cummins      City & County Managers Association

Mr. Ian Brannigan      Western Development Commission

Mr. Vincent Dunphy      Southern Regional Assembly

Mr. John Breslin      NUI Galway

#### **SOCIAL PARTNERS**

Ms. Sinead Dooley      Irish Rural Link

#### **HORIZONTAL INTERESTS**

Mr. Terry Dunne      Environment Policy Unit (DCCAIE)

#### **OTHER ESIF MANAGING AUTHORITIES**

Ms. Therese Callery      ESF Managing Authority

#### **NON-MEMBERS: ADVISORS**

Ms. Merja Toikka      EU Commission

Ms. Elena Panteva      EU Commission

**NORTHERN & WESTERN REGIONAL ASSEMBLY STAFF**

Mr. Barry Guckian	Northern & Western Regional Assembly
Mr. Michael O'Brien	Northern & Western Regional Assembly
Ms. Gerardine Lafferty	Northern & Western Regional Assembly
Ms. Pauline Grennan	Northern & Western Regional Assembly

**GUEST SPEAKERS**

Joanne Reilly	Kinvara Skincare
Peter Morrow	Skylark Attic Stairs
Breda Fox	Galway LEO