



Northern & Western Regional Assembly

**MINUTES OF THE NORTHERN & WESTERN REGIONAL ASSEMBLY MEETING
HELD ON 25TH OCTOBER 2019 IN THE
ASSEMBLY CHAMBER AT 11.00 A M**

Present:

Cllr Declan Bree
Cllr Tim Broderick
Cllr John Caulfield
Cllr David Collins
Cllr Donal Gilroy
Cllr Christy Hyland
Cllr Donal Lyons

Cllr David Maxwell
Cllr Frank McBrearty
Cllr Jimmy McClearn
Cllr Enda McGloin
Cllr Patrick McGowan
Cllr Brian McKenna
Cllr Jarlath Munnelly

Cllr Gerry Murray
Cllr Jack Murray
Cllr John Naughten
Cllr Joe Sheridan
Cllr Enda Stenson

Cllr Declan McDonnell **PRESIDED**

Apologies:

David Minton Director
Cllr Justin Warnock

Cllr Niall McNelis
Cllr Sean Smith

Cllr Craig Lovett
Cllr. Orla Leyden

Officials: Northern & Western Regional Assembly:

Mr Denis Kelly (Assistant Director)
Mr Gerry Doyle (Assistant Director)
Mr Frank Flanagan (Senior Executive Planner)
Mr Conall McGettigan (Senior Executive Planner)
Ms Sharon Conway (Auditor)

Mr. Seamus Neely, Designated Chief Executive

**1. Adoption of Minutes of Meeting of Northern & Western Regional Assembly held
20th September 2019**

Proposed by: Cllr David Maxwell

Seconded by: Cllr Donal Lyons

Resolved:

“That the minutes of the meeting of the Northern & Western Regional Assembly held on 20th September 2019 be adopted.”

2. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

3 Presentation by Mr. Niall Cussens MIPI Planning Regulator

Niall Cussens gave a comprehensive overview of the role and functions of the Planning Regulator (Appendix I). Following his address Members were afforded an opportunity to raise questions which Mr. Cussens replied to.

Amongst the issue raised were;

- Perception that east coast Urban Centric Planning is discriminating against rural Ireland;
- 6 Cases were under investigation nationally and they should be dealt with;
- The general lack of understanding at national level of the issues affecting the region;
- The need for meaningful public consultation in advance of development plans being adopted so that there can be early buy in from local communities in respect of specific development proposals included in these Plans;
- Objections to development from people living outside the area of a development proposal blocking much needed local development;
- The critical need for key greenfield and brownfield sites within towns and villages to be identified which are capable of being developed – these could lead to new life been created in our towns and villages.
- Need for a properly designed tax incentive scheme to incentivise their development;
- The importance of holding pre planning meetings and the slow response from some planning authorities regarding holding pre planning meetings;
- The legal status of provisions restricting planning permission being granted to local people with a connection to a rural area;
- Land Development Agency – will it intervene to activate land where the landowner is sitting on zoned lands.
- Need Irish Water Investment Programme to deal with inadequate infrastructure in rural towns and villages;
- Urban Area Plan for Athlone – what is timeline for enabling legislation;
- Development Plans have policy on one off housing that is essentially ‘one size fits all’ and this is not appropriate across the country;
- Flemish decree – what is the current position;
- How can LA deliver on the increased Heights/densities;
- Local authorities not engaging with each other appropriately and there is a need for more interaction – how can OPR assist;
- How many Mahon recommendations have been implemented?

Niall Cussens responded in detail to all queries raised, including as follows:

- Within his office there is a very good understanding of the challenges faced by rural areas in the Northern and Western Region.
- Acknowledged some small towns where little infrastructure capacity to enable investment/renewal needs to be addressed.

- Under the NPF provision was included for small priming grants so as to develop key sites in towns and villages and he added that bringing more people into towns and villages was critical to their long-term sustainability.
- Dept reviewing uptake of Living Cities Initiative and lessons learnt.
- Regulations amended to enable change of use of shops to residential;
- Referenced NPO 18(b) of NPF and little uptake by Local Authorities;
- Irish Water – looking to have small discretionary fund for each LA to agree targeted renewal/enablement of local centres;
- OPR will be relentless in undertaking research on activating town and village
- The pre planning process was critically important in delivering an effective planning service and that he would like to see some planning authorities giving a quicker response to requests in this regard.
- Getting the public interested in preparation of development plans had traditionally been difficult and that more use of social media and interactive displays to clearly illustrate development proposals should be used as well as meetings held in local communities. He added that he was a firm advocate of more consultation and cooperation between planning authorities and that where this is in place it has helped to resolve issues concerning adjoining planning authorities.
- LDA is at the startup stage and is initially looking at the larger areas but happy to engage to acquire or use public and other lands;
- One size does not fit all for rural housing. A tailored approach to one off housing is required. The Flemish Decree ruling is seeking to recalibrate our objective decision making around one off rural housing – discussions are ongoing to deal with the concern raised by the EU;
- Heights/density guidelines are complex and have broad approach that needs to be considered and implemented locally;
- Dialogue between Local Authorities is continually ongoing and sometimes it is not as effective as they would like but there is often very good interaction;
- Legislation is required to deliver Urban Area Plans

4. Corporate Plan

Gerry Doyle Assistant Director stated that it was hoped to have a draft of the Corporate Plan available at the meeting to be held on 15th November and to have it put for consideration for adoption at the December meeting. He added that if Members wished to make submissions prior to the Draft being completed they should do so by 6th November to allow time for them to be considered for inclusion in the Draft.

5. Planning and Economic Development

RSES Update

Denis Kelly gave Members a brief update, confirming that the consultation on the proposed material amendments to the Draft RSES had now closed and that almost 100 submissions had been received with about 50% being in respect of Greenway/rail issues. He suggested that SPA meetings be scheduled for the West and Border Committees initially to discuss the issues arising and that this be followed up by further discussions at the November meeting.

He also advised that a Senior officials advisory meeting would be scheduled and suggested that this may be 29th November 2019.

Members agreed that the Border SPA Meeting be held on 7th November at 11am in Donegal (venue TBC) and that the West SPA Meeting be held on 8th November at 10.30 in HQ.

Planning Matters

Denis Kelly advised that notice of Review of the existing Longford County Development Plan 2015-2021 and Preparation of new Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027 had been received. He also advised that notice of the review the Louth County Development Plan 2015-2021 and the preparation of a new Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 had been received.

Members agreed that both should be acknowledged and that they be advised that the RSES is currently being prepared, with proposed material amendments to the Draft RSES being considered and that it is hoped to adopt the RSES in December 2019.

6. Correspondence

There was no correspondence to note.

7. Any Other Business

Vote of Sympathy

It was agreed to pass a Vote of Sympathy to Cllr Declan Bree on the death of Dr Tom Connolly and to David Minton, Director, Northern and Western Regional Assembly, on the death of his uncle.

Regional Drugs Task force

It was agreed that the matter of the nomination of 4 Elected members from the Assembly to the Regional Drugs Task Force should be deferred to the November meeting.

Invite to MEP's

At the request of Cllr David Maxwell, the Members agreed that the Assembly should write to each of the MEP's in our region to invite them to our January meeting.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed: _____

Cathaoirleach

Date: _____