



Northern & Western Regional Assembly

MINUTES OF THE NORTHERN & WESTERN REGIONAL ASSEMBLY MEETING HELD ON 26TH APRIL 2019 IN THE ASSEMBLY CHAMBER AT 10.30 AM

Present:

Cllr Keith Henry	Cllr Seamus Coyle	Cllr Dermot Connolly
Cllr Seamus O'Domhnaill	Cllr Seamus Kilgannon	Cllr. Patsy O'Brien
Cllr Mary Hoade	Cllr Declan McDonnell	Cllr Jimmy McClearn
Cllr Paddy Smith	Cllr Gerry Murray	Cllr Frank Dolan
Cllr Jerry Lundy	Cllr Justin Warnock	Cllr Niall McNelis
Cllr Nigel Dineen	Cllr Enda Stenson	Mr. Seamus Neely
Cllr Richard Finn		

Cllr Seamus Coyle **PRESIDED**

Apologies:

Cllr. John Caulfield	Cllr Jack Murray	Cllr Joe Murphy
Cllr Pearce Flannery	Cllr Frank McBrearty	Cllr Sean Smith
Cllr Jackie Crowe		

Officials: Northern & Western Regional Assembly:

Mr David Minton (Director)
Mr Denis Kelly (Assistant Director & Senior Planner)
Mr Frank Flanagan (Senior Executive Planner)
Mr Conall McGettigan (Senior Executive Planner)
Mr Patrick Devine (Staff Officer)
Ms Brenda Finn (Clerical Officer)

1. Adoption of Minutes of Meeting of Northern & Western Regional Assembly held 12th April 2019

Proposed by: Cllr Seamus Kilgannon

Seconded by: Cllr Jerry Lundy

Resolved:

“That the minutes of the meeting of the Northern & Western Regional Assembly held on 12th April 2019 be adopted.”

2. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

3. Planning and Economic Development

RSES Update

Mr. Denis Kelly spoke to members regarding consideration to the Directors Report. Mr. Kelly said that the team had considered all the feedback they received from members since the close of consultations. The initial public consultation ran from November 2018 until February 2019 following several detailed meetings. The number of submissions received were discussed at the February meeting. At the Assembly meeting in March, which was held in Derry, timelines were identified. Further considerations of the emerging report were made during the series of meetings in March and April.

There were West & Border SPA meetings held on the 12th & 13th of March.

A further joint SPA meeting held on 27th March.

The document was again discussed at length at our Assembly meeting on 12th April and, The draft Directors Report was issued to members last Thursday 18th April.

Mr Kelly reminded members of the SEA/AA/SFRA and that an addendum to the Director's Report had been circulated. He confirmed that it listed proposed Material Amendments and that all other proposed amendments were non-material. He advised that they will need to determine if SEA and AA should be necessary in respect of all proposed Material Amendments and that it was the view of the Executive that SEA and AA should be carried out. He apologised to Mr Seamus Neely, Chief Executive Designate that the document was not issued to him until earlier this week.

Denis Kelly requested consideration of the Directors Report via the Chairman, Seamus Coyle.

The Cathaoirleach Cllr Seamus Coyle thanked Mr Kelly and his team for all the work that had gone into bringing the document to this stage. The Directors Report was then considered:

Proposed by: Cllr Gerry Murray (who on behalf of members confirmed they had all read the report)

Seconded by: Cllr Patsy O'Brien

“that the Northern and Western Regional Assembly agree with the recommendations in the Directors Report and addendum and that it be adopted”

Mr Kelly requested via the Cathaoirleach that he take Members through the report chapter by chapter and the addendum to inform members of changes proposed to the draft RSES. He also outlined the process from here on out as regards proposed Material Amendments, further consultation and incorporation of SEA/AA into the process. He informed the meeting that it is recommended that chapters 1 and 2 be rewritten to reflect that the document will be finalized and cease its Draft status, it is the intention to have the Galway MASP sit on its own in the finalized document and the 3 regional centres of Athlone, Letterkenny and Sligo would be dealt with together in one section/subsection.

The following points were raised:

Cllr O'Domhnaill – Questioned how rigid the time frame is and has the proper length of consultation been had, specifically on chapter - rural and urban places. Also, what is the rural housing policy that the RSES is hoping to adopt?

Cllr McNelis – Stated that he received a text from his Chief Executive stating that he had not seen the Directors Report and was unable to offer his opinion today.

Cllr Connolly – Are we satisfied that in relation to water services that all rural areas will be serviced?

Cllr O'Domhnaill – As the draft can only be adopted once and when in place it stands for 12 years, should we go back to officials in our area to look at it again? Is it within the Act to put it out to further consultation if material changes need to be made?

Cllr Kilgannon – Thanked the staff for all the hard work that has been put into the document. He confirmed that members clearly stated at all the meetings that they were happy with the timeframe. Four weeks today is the election, so he stated his support of Cllr O'Brien in his suggestion that we adopt today. Cllr Kilgannon is confident it will serve this Region well in the future.

Cllr Gerry Murray – Expressed his support that we adopt the Draft today. He wished to thank the Assembly, stating that it was the most open and transparent consultation process he had ever seen. This draft is well and truly fit and ready to be sent to public consultation.

Cllr Dineen – Asked if this was adopted today, can there be amendments put in. He acknowledged the trojan work the Assembly has put in but stated that we need to get it right.

Cllr Hoade – Stated it is unfortunate with the timing of the elections. Asked if submissions be accepted to proposed changes if it is adopted today?

Cllr Stenson – Praised all the work the Assembly has put into this document. There was a lot of work and involvement put into this by members.

Cllr Henry – Complemented the Assembly staff. As we have been working on this for over a year now, therefore he stated his support in the call to put proposed changes out to public. He reminded Members that the town plans and county development plans are on hold as they have to await the RSES.

Mr Kelly replied to the points raised as follows:

The timelines and consultation process were outlined at the start and reiterated that all material amendments would be subject to consultation as prescribed. He informed the meeting that subject to environmental assessments being carried out he expected that the Assembly would be in a position to commence the next round of consultation at the beginning of June but that in any event it would not commence before the May elections. The finalisation of the RSES could happen in July or it could run into September depending on the amount of work arising. He also told the meeting that the NWRA were at a similar position in the process to the SRA and slightly behind EMRA. He advised that the Draft RSES as previously pointed out did not deal with rural housing in any great detail as it is felt

that this was something that could more appropriately be dealt with at PA level. He was of the opinion that there was nothing particular in the Draft that would prevent the development of rural housing.

Chief Executive Designate, Mr Seamus Neely, introduced himself to the members. He stated that he received the report late and accepted that it was an oversight that it was not issued to him last week. Mr Neely stated that he did not have enough time to discuss it with his colleagues to see if there is anything missing from it. He stated that he is conscious of his role in communicating their feedback and they would have preferred to have considered it with their teams at local level. Mr Seamus Neely noted that he did not wish to overstep the mark in terms of his Role as CED, however, he did ask that he and his colleagues be given an additional week to review, and assess the Directors Report on the Draft RSES, before the matter was brought back before members, for a decision.

In response a number of the Elected Members objected to such a request, including:

Cllr Gerry Murray stated that it is his view that the members need to exercise their right to have a hands-on roll in this strategy. He went on to state that the role of the Assembly was to adopt the RSES, and that the NWRA Planning Team had gone through the process with members step by step, and he was satisfied that no additional time was required to further review the contents of the report, and he did not agree with any further delay.

Cllr O'Brien wished to strongly agree with Cllr. Murray, and he went on to state that he feels it would be irresponsible to walk away today without considering the Director's Report. He is very confident that it is a good and stable document.

Cllr. McClearn further agreed with Cllrs Murray and O'Brien, and stated that to delay the adoption of the report beyond the date of this meeting would represent the Elected Members being remiss in their duties. Such a scenario would result in the passing of the decision to a new Assembly, and it was very possible that a significant number of these new Cllr's, would have had no involvement in the process whatsoever previously, and this was not the correct course of action. He further stated he was deeply uncomfortable with any suggestion that Chief Executives, or Local Authority staff were not fully engaged with throughout the process, and this matter had not previously been raised as a concern.

Cathaoirleach Cllr Seamus Coyle stated that it was his goal to bring this as near to completion as this Assembly possibly could. He also stated that there was huge consultation on both sides, between his local authority and the Assembly.

Mr David Minton acknowledged the kind words the members expressed regarding the hard work the Assembly staff put into the document. Mr Minton also apologised to Mr Seamus Neely that the document was not issued to him last week. He acknowledged the role of the Chief Executives and appreciates the expertise and guidance they have to offer. We must accept the transparency we tried to adopt, and we have been committed to open engagement throughout this consultation.

Mr. Kelly was asked by the Cathaoirleach to continue to take the members through the report (including the Addendum Report) and the proposed material amendments. Mr Kelly then took Members through each section of the report commenting on proposed amendments to each section, giving Members an opportunity after each section to discuss and reach agreement on same. He identified all proposed Material Amendments that were

recommended within the report and in addition clarified that the proposed RPO at No.8, Page 15 should be read as a proposed material amendment in the same way as that of No.5 of the Addendum Report. He identified that RPO 'c' in page 54 is also recommended as a Material Amendment.

The following points were raised by the members as Mr Kelly brought the Members through the report:

- Cllr Warnock expressed his concerns regarding forestry plantation in Leitrim stating that it is companies that are planting and not farmers.
- Cllr McNelis questioned with regards to Galway harbour why the following needs to be included "subject to environmental and visual considerations, as well as transport and economic viability requirements"
- Cllr McClearn asked if we are to take it that the TII are leaving the door open to come back and toll the roads? He would prefer if this was excluded.

Mr. Kelly responded to queries and advised that the environmental sensitivities of our ports and coastal areas is a significant consideration and that the wording regarding the ports was recommended.

Proposed by: Cllr Jimmy McClearn

Seconded by: Cllr Mary Hoade

Resolved:

"that the phrase 'including through the management of travel demand' be excluded from recommendation 2 page 73 of Directors report"

Proposed by: Cllr Seamus O'Domhnaill

Seconded by: Cllr Patsy O'Brien

Resolved:

"Comprehensive Maps of the Ten T routes across the Region are included in the Final document"

Proposed by: Cllr Niall McNelis

Seconded by: Cllr Jimmy McClearn

Resolved:

"that RPO62 be amended to say Galway Port be upgraded to Tier1 status"

Proposed by: Cllr Seamus O'Domhnaill

Seconded by: Cllr Niall McNelis

Resolved:

"that RPO62 be amended to also say Killybegs be upgraded to Tier1 status"

Cllr Dermot Connolly raised his concerns regarding Rossaveal port not being mentioned. Conall Mc Gettigan responded noting that in RPO 57 Rossaveal is mentioned.

Cllr O'Domhnaill requested that 'Letterkenny bypass' be changed to Bunagee link' on page 74 of the report.

Cathaoirleach Cllr Seamus Coyle thanked Mr Kelly, his team and all the members for their input. Cllr Coyle asked members if they wished to revert back to the initial proposal.

Proposed by: Cllr Gerry Murray

Seconded by: Cllr Patsy O'Brien

Resolved:

1. *'that the Northern and Western Regional Assembly adopt the recommendations in the Directors report and its addendum';*
2. *'that the Northern and Western Regional Assembly propose material amendments to the Draft RSES in accordance with the Director's report and its addendum, also including RPO at No.8, Page 15, RPO 'c' on page 54, and amendments to RPO 62 and the new RPO proposed at No2 Page 73 and to prepare them for the necessary public consultation';*
3. *'that it is determined that a Strategic Environmental Assessment and an Appropriate Assessment would be necessary'.*

All agreed.

Mr Kelly confirmed that the executive would work towards the Material Amendments going out for public consultation in the first week of June.

4. Conferences/Training

Members were advised that there were no notifications of forthcoming Conferences/Training.

5. Correspondence

There was no correspondence.

6. Any Other Business

Cllr Coyle stated that this Assembly stays in place until after the elections on May 24th. He said it has been a year of learning and wished to thank all the members for the trust they put in him as Cathaoirleach.

He said that he is a firm believer in the Region and that even though we are moving to a transition Region after 2021, it will provide opportunity also. Cllr Coyle also thanked the members for the many friendships he had built up over the five years.

As Cllr Paddy Smith and Cllr Jerry Lundy will not be seeking re-election, Cllr Coyle thanked them for their contribution and wished them the best for the future.

Finally, Cllr Coyle thanked the staff of the Assembly and Chief Executive Seamus Neely.

Mr David Minton concluded the meeting by acknowledging the commitment and dedication of members over the past 5 years and wished everyone the best of luck in the upcoming elections.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed: _____
Cathaoirleach

Date: _____