



Northern & Western Regional Assembly

MINUTES OF THE NORTHERN & WESTERN REGIONAL ASSEMBLY MEETING HELD ON 18TH SEPTEMBER 2020 IN ROSCOMMON COUNTY COUNCIL CHAMBER AT 11.00 A.M.

Present:

Cllr. Declan Bree	Cllr. Craig Lovett	Cllr. Brian McKenna
Cllr. Tim Broderick	Cllr. Donal Lyons	Cllr. Niall McNelis
Cllr. David Collins	Cllr. Frank McBrearty	Cllr. Jack Murray
Cllr. Donal Gilroy	Cllr. Jimmy McClearn	Cllr. Joe Sheridan
Cllr. Christy Hyland	Cllr. Declan McDonnell	Cllr. Justin Warnock
Cllr. Orla Leyden	Cllr. Patrick McGowan	

Cllr. David Maxwell **PRESIDED**

Apologies: Cllr. John Caulfield, Cllr. Enda McGloin, Cllr. Jarlath Munnely,
Cllr. John Naughten, Cllr. Sean Smith, Cllr. Enda Stenson

Officials: Northern & Western Regional Assembly:

Mr David Minton (Director)
Mr Denis Kelly (Assistant Director & Senior Planner)
Mr Gerry Doyle (Assistant Director)
Mr Conall McGettigan (Senior Executive Planner)
Mr Barry Guckian (Programme Executive)
Ms Kelly Muldoon (Clerical Officer)

1. **Adoption of the Minutes of the Meeting of the Northern & Western Regional Assembly held on 24th July 2020:**

Proposed by: Cllr Donal Gilroy

Seconded by: Cllr Jimmy McClearn

Resolved:

“That the minutes of the meeting of the Northern & Western Regional Assembly held on 24th July, 2020 be adopted”

2. **Matters Arising:**

Cllr. David Collins queried if the NWRA had engaged with Irish Water as proposed at the Assembly meeting held on 24th July. Mr David Minton confirmed that the NWRA will be issuing an invitation to Irish Water to meet with the NWRA in the coming months.

3. Planning and Economic Development:

(i) **Covid 19 – Issues and Opportunities: Presentation by John Daly (Economist for the Three regional Assemblies)** – Presentation circulated

John Daly presented (remotely) to the Assembly members outlining the economic status of the Northern Western Region prior to Covid 19, the impact of Covid 19 and the NWRA submission to the National Economic Recovery Plan, copy available via this link <https://www.nwra.ie/news/covid-19-issues-and-opportunities-presentation-by-john-daly/>

Cllr. Jimmy McClearn stated that similar presentations had been made to the Assembly previously and stated it was now down to us to do something about it.

Cllr. Declan McDonnell discussed the impact of Covid 19 on the over 2,000 business in Galway City and emphasised that EU Funding needed to be managed and distributed to protect the entire Northern & Western region.

Cllr. Donal Gilroy pointed out that if the Border Region was taken on its own without the West it would be in “less developed” status. Mr David Minton agreed with this point but clarified the NUTS level classifications at regional and sub regional levels. Cllr. Gilroy explained that the need for Local and Regional Enterprises Hubs in smaller towns was increasing due to the need to work remotely outside of larger towns and cities due to Covid 19. Mr Minton explained that John Daly would present on Enterprise Hubs in the next Assembly Meeting.

Cllr Brian McKenna suggested that the Region in Transition report and Covid 19 – Issues and Opportunities: Presentation by John Daly could form the basis for a submission to Government to seek funding for the Northern & Western region.

(ii) **Region in Transition: Campaign Briefing:**

Mr David Minton outlined that the Region in Transition report proved that there is a two-speed economy on the island of Ireland with the Northern & Western region lagging. He stated that the Programme for Government acknowledged the ongoing importance and role of regional assemblies in management of EU funding programmes which is essential in order to reverse the increasing trend of the Northern and Western region away from a “Developed Region” to a “Region in Transition” and that the North & West will receive 60% co funding from the EU Commission (ERDF).

In response, the Cathaoirleach had requested Mr Minton brief members that, the NWRA propose to launch a campaign involving sending an open letter and booklet to members of the Dáil, Séanad and Local Authorities. This would be done alongside a Social Media and Local /National Media campaign. Mr Minton also advised that members had suggested hosting an Oireachtas Meeting with Ministers and the executive could arrange this. Mr Minton highlighted the “Integrated Territorial Investment Programme” as an EU instrument to address the trend in regional disparities.

Cllr. Niall McNelis suggested that each Assembly member should raise a motion within their own Local Authority and their respective Local Authorities needed to push this campaign also. Cllr. McNelis also suggested that separate meetings should be held on a county by county basis in order to push the campaign at local level to strengthen the campaign. Cllr. Donal Gilroy suggested including MEPs also. Cllr. Gilroy agreed with Cllr McNelis that the NWRA should focus at County level and suggested engaging with the local media, with each Assembly member concentrating on their own area.

Cllr. Brian McKenna highlighted that funding is often directed at key towns in the region to meet the criteria for positive discrimination but does not always reach smaller towns in the region.

Cllr. Patrick McGowan emphasised that funding needs to be focussed based on established needs. Cllr. McGowan stated that the campaign should be pushed by the Local Authorities and Elected Members as a whole, across all parties. Cllr. McGowan also emphasised the need for a consistent approach and that should be addressed at all Assembly meetings going forward.

Cllr. Declan McDonnell discussed the importance of pushing the campaign at national level and in Dublin as many Ministers are based in Dublin. Cllr. McDonnell highlighted that Galway City supports surrounding counties by providing employment and this should be considered when discussing distribution of funding. Cllr. McDonnell also suggested briefing Chief Executives about the campaign so that they and the Elected Members continue to work together in promote the aims of the campaign also.

Cllr. Justin Warnock suggested the Chief Executives and Assembly Members should work together to get funding for their areas.

Cllr. Frank McBrearty queried if the two Ministers in the region had been approached. Cllr David Maxwell explained that there have been meetings held with Minister Humphreys and former Minister Calleary.

Cllr. Christy Hyland emphasised that the campaign should promote the concept of quality of life in the region in terms work/life balance and remote working.

Mr David Minton agreed that the campaign should focus on local media with key messages coming from each county. He added that he has engaged with eight of the Chief Executive Officers on the Corporate Plan and had also briefed them on the issues relating to the proposed campaign in recent weeks. Mr Minton explained that Ireland has been allocated €1bn over 2021 – 2027 through the EU Regional Development Fund and emphasised the importance of ensuring that those funds are funnelled to the correct areas. He added that the campaign will aim to leverage extra funding through positive discrimination and the EU co-funding of 60% for Regions in Transition.

It was agreed by all Assembly Members to proceed with the proposed campaign as soon as possible in advance of a final decision being made on funding under the new Operational Programme.

- (iii) To note the following submissions (as discussed at the SPA Meeting):
 - a. “Proposed Variations to Galway City Development Plans”



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b. “Proposed Draft Variation No. 1 to the Sligo County Development Plan”

Proposed by: Cllr. Patrick McGowan

Seconded by: Cllr. Donal Lyons

Resolved:

“That the Proposed Variations to Galway City Development Plans” and “Proposed Draft Variation No. 1 to the Sligo County Development Plan” are noted by the Assembly Members”

(iv) Transboundary Environmental Public Consultation: Sizewell C Nuclear Power Plant, Suffolk UK.

Mr Conall McGettigan Senior Executive Planner presented to the Assembly Members on the Transboundary Environmental Public Consultation: Sizewell C Nuclear Power Plant, Suffolk UK (See [appendix 1](#)).

Following the presentation, Cllr David Maxwell explained that a motion had been raised on this matter inside of the 14 days noticed as set out in the Standing orders and asked if the Assembly members were willing to accept this as an addition to the agenda.

Proposed by: Cllr. Donal Lyons

Seconded by: Cllr. Donal Gilroy

Resolved:

“That the motion raised by Cllr Declan Bree on the Transboundary Environmental Public Consultation: Sizewell C Nuclear Power Plant, Suffolk UK be added to the agenda ”

The Cathaoirleach read out the motion and invited Cllr Bree to speak to it.

Cllr. Declan Bree explained that this proposal had been discussed at the SPA meetings and that it would set a dangerous precedent not to object to this proposal and that the motion was consistent with Irish policy.

Cllr. Brian McKenna supported the motion and highlighted that the site in Sizewell, Suffolk UK was a short distance from Ireland in terms of nuclear fallout. Cllr. McKenna also highlighted that Ireland was opposed to further development of the Nuclear Power Plant in Sellafield.

Cllr. Orla Leyden complimented Cllr. Bree on his work on this motion and supported it also.

Mr David Minton explained that an Environmental Report had been prepared by the relevant authority in the UK and that Ireland had been consulted in accordance with the Espoo Convention, which was the consultation process that was presented to Members by Conall McGettigan today.



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Proposed by: Cllr. Declan Bree

Seconded by: Cllr. Declan McDonnell

Resolved:

'This Assembly calls upon the Government's Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government and the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment to object in the strongest possible terms to the proposed construction of two EPR-type nuclear reactors at Sizewell in Suffolk in the UK on the grounds that a severe accident, however remote the possibility, could have a devastating impact on the island of Ireland, and such a possibility has not been properly considered.

This Assembly also calls on the Government to seek a full Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) to be conducted by the UK Government under national regulations informed by EU law. This includes a full invocation of Ireland's call to be fully consulted and for Irish public input to be included in the EIA and Appropriate Assessment. This Assembly calls in addition for an EIA to be undertaken as part of the UNECE Espoo Convention, ensuring that transboundary impacts cannot be excluded.

A severe accident scenario, such as the one suggested by the Radiological Protection Institute of Ireland, (1) would involve a loss of coolant with a release of fission products to the environment. This Assembly notes that impacts from the Chernobyl severe accident impacted on Ireland, and it notes an ESRI report that has indicated that, even in a severe accident scenario of no radioactive fallout hitting Ireland, the discounted economic losses were €4 billion, due to reputational impacts to tourism & agriculture. (2)

Nuclear engineer, the late John Large, expanded on this type of scenario pointing out that the fuel core would completely melt after about 16 hours. This could cause an explosion and a scenario very similar to the events at Fukushima. (3) Although EDF Energy's Environmental Statement for a similar plant to Sizewell C being built at Hinkley Point C (HPC) says the likely impacts of an accident do not extend beyond the county of Somerset and the Severn Estuary, a report for the Austrian Environment Agency says severe accidents at HPC with considerable releases of radioactive caesium-137 cannot be ruled out, although their probability may be low. There is no convincing rationale why such accidents should not be addressed in the Environmental Statement (ES); quite to the contrary, it would appear rather evident that they should be included in the assessment since their effects can be widespread and long-lasting. (4)

This Assembly also calls on cooperation with the All Ireland Nuclear Free Local Authorities (NFLA) Sustainable Energy Forum, potentially in collaboration with the Irish Environment Network, to developing a detailed report on this matter with facilitation of a local workshop webinar on this matter, should the Assembly wish it.'

4. Members Administration:

Mr Gerry Doyle presented on Circular LG 05/2020 on Annual Expenses Allowances. Mr Doyle explained that members were required to attend 80% of physical meetings in order to qualify for their full allowance and that virtual meetings would not be counted in terms of attendance for allowances. It is intended that subject to public health advice there will be a total of 7 physical



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meetings in 2020, however if a member was unable to attend for Covid related reasons as outlined in the Circular the number of relevant meetings would reduce accordingly.

Cllr Orla Leyden queried why virtual meetings were not being counted and suggested writing to the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government in anticipation of further physical meetings being cancelled due to local or national lockdowns. Mr Doyle agreed to this.

The following dates were agreed for upcoming meetings in the Chamber in Roscommon County Council subject to the prevailing public health advice:

16th October 2020

20th November 2020

18th December 2020

5. **Facility: Cost Benefit Analysis**

Cllr. David Maxwell explained that the lease for HQ in Ballaghderreen was due for renewal and suggested a sub-committee be established to report back to the Assembly on a proposal regarding the building lease. Cllr. Maxwell suggested the sub-committee comprise of the following make up so that all parties are represented:

The Cathaoirleach, 1 Labour rep, 2 Fianna Fáil, reps, 2 Fine Gael reps, 2 Independent reps and 1 Sinn Féin rep

Cllr Declan McDonnell suggested that the Leas Cathaoirleach sit on the sub-committee also

The following councillors were voted to the sub-committee

Cllr David Maxwell

Cllr Tim Broderick

Cllr. Niall McNelis

Cllr. Orla Leyden –

Cllr Patrick McGowan

Cllr. Jimmy McClearn

Cllr. David Collins

Cllr. Declan McDonnell

Cllr. Declan Bree

Cllr. Jack Murray

6. **Correspondence:**

Mr David Minton noted that there was a correspondence from Minister Michael McGrath informing the NWRA that a decision regarding the European Regional Development Fund was under review.



7. **Notice of Motion by Cllr Justin Warnock:**

Proposed by: Cllr Justin Warnock

Seconded by: Cllr Donal Gilroy

Resolved:

“That the NWRA Assembly writes to the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Marine Charlie McConalogue TD and the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment Eamon Ryan TD to develop an economic strategy to deal with the wool crisis in this Region and Country, as a result of the global collapse in the price over the past 3 years, Brexit and our reliance on Britain to purchase 95% or 7 - 8 million kilos of our annual wool clip”

Cllr. Justin Warnock explained that the price of wool has dropped dramatically over that past few years and that stockpiles could be used as insulation for housing in a sustainable and environmentally friendly way.

Cllr. Patrick McGowan supported the motion and highlighted that disposing of the wool was difficult as it was classified as waste.

Cllr Orla Leyden also supported the motion

The motion was unanimously agreed

8. **Any Other Business:**

Cllr. Declan Bree queried if there had been any further engagement on the Sligo County Development Plan. Mr Denis Kelly clarified that this was now with the Local Authority for consideration and that the Chief Executive Report will be issued. My Kelly also clarified that the NWRA are always available to discuss further if clarifications were needed.

Cllr Declan McDonnell queried if there was a meeting date regarding the Western Corridor. Mr David Minton clarified that there were no details on a meeting date as yet but that he would follow up in respect of same.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed: _____

Cathaoirleach

Date: _____