

**MINUTES OF THE NORTHERN & WESTERN REGIONAL ASSEMBLY MEETING HELD ON THE 18TH
DECEMBER 2020 IN ROSCOMMON COUNTY COUNCIL CHAMBER AT 11AM**

Present

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|------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Cllr. Declan Bree | Cllr. Jack Murray | Cllr. Craig Lovett |
| Cllr. Brian Mc Kenna | Cllr. Michael Crowe | Cllr. Donal Lyons |
| Cllr. Niall McNelis | Cllr. David Collins | Cllr. Frank McBrearty |
| Cllr Donal Gilroy | Cllr. Jimmy McClearn | Cllr. Joe Sheridan |
| Cllr. Cristy Hyland | Cllr. Declan McDonnell | Cllr. Tim Broderick |
| Cllr. Orla Leyden | Cllr. Enda McGloin | Cllr. Jarlath Munnelly |
| Cllr. John Naughten | Cllr. Sean Smith | Cllr. Enda Stenson |
| Cllr Patrick McGowan | Cllr. Michael Crowe | |
| Cllr. David Maxwell Presided | | |

Apologies

Cllr John Caulfield

Cllr Justin Warnock

Officials: Northern & western Regional Assembly:

Mr David Minton (Director)
Mr Denis Kelly (Assistant Director and Senior Planner)
Mr Gerry Doyle (Assistant Director)
Mr. Frank Flanagan Senior Executive Planner
Ms Catriona Meehan (Clerical Officer)

1. Adoption of the Minutes of the Meeting of the Northern & Western Regional Assembly held on 18th of December 2020:

Proposed by: Cllr. Enda Stenson

Seconded by: Cllr. Donal Gilroy

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

2. Matters Arising

New Member – Cllr Michael Crowe Galway City Council

The Cathaoirleach, Cllr David Maxwell welcomed Cllr Michael Crowe to the Assembly who is being nominated to the Assembly through the Committee of the Regions.

3. Planning and Economic Development

- a) Presentation by Irish Water** – Cathaoirleach, Cllr. David Maxwell informed members that the presentation due to be given by Irish Water has been postponed until the January meeting. Cllr. Donal Gilroy asked to note that the figures circulated by Irish Water (in advance of their planned meeting) were not up to date and this should be highlighted when they present to the Assembly.

b) RSES Implementation Update

Denis Kelly provided an update to Members in respect of the implementation of the RSES. – Copy of presentation given by Mr. Denis Kelly is included as Appendix 1 to the Minutes.

C) Development Plan Consultations

Mr Denis Kelly Assistant Director confirmed that members had been notified of consultations received regarding development plans and introduced Frank Flanagan asking that he make a presentation on them.

a) Consideration of Proposed Variation No. 7 to Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023(circulated)

Mr. Frank Flanagan Senior Executive Planner advised Members that a report had been circulated and gave a presentation on the proposed variation - included as Appendix 1 to the Minutes

Proposed: Cllr Declan McDonnell

Seconded: Cllr Frank McBrearty

Resolved:

'That a submission be made regarding the Proposed Variation No.7 to Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023 in accordance with the report furnished'

b) Consideration of Proposed Draft Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027(circulated)

Presentation given by Mr. Frank Flanagan Senior Executive Planner is included as Appendix 1 to the Minutes

Cllr. Donal Gilroy stated that the Longford County Development Plan would be like most counties in our region as the rural/urban split in Longford is reflective of our region. Cllr Frank McBrearty stated that Longford County Council had focussed on developing smaller towns and villages which is in line with the reality of the rural composition of the county.

Cllr. Brian McKenna questioned whether individual members were required to examine each Draft County Development Plan in detail and make suggestions or would they get a breakdown of information contained in each Plan. It was stated by Mr. Frank Flanagan Senior Executive Planner that no individual member would be required to make a submission and that the Elected Members could after having reviewed Draft Submissions from the Planning Technical Staff approve submissions to be made on behalf of the Assembly.

Denis Kelly asked Members to confirm if the submission should be made in accordance with the issues outlined by Frank Flanagan in his report.

Proposed: Cllr Joe Sheridan

Seconded: Cllr Declan McDonnell

Resolved:

'That a submission be made regarding the Proposed Draft Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027 in accordance with the report given'

d) National Development Plan Review - Update

Mr. David Minton, Director advised that the Assembly had been notified of the consultation in respect of the review of the NDP and that that it is envisaged that at the January meeting an outline of proposals for inclusion as part of the National Development Plan Review would be given. He added that this would also form part of the discussion with Minister Eamonn Ryan in a meeting he envisaged would be held in January. He then asked Denis Kelly to provide a brief outline of the draft structure of the report. Denis Kelly provided a presentation to Members – see Appendix 1 to the minutes.

4. Operational Programme 2014 – 2020 Update

Mr Gerry Doyle Assistant Director gave an update on the Operational Programme included as Appendix 4 to the Minutes of the Meeting. He outlined progress that was made in realising the OP's N+3 budgetary requirement and the OP Modification which re-allocated unspent monies in Priorities 1,2, and 3 into the new Health Support Scheme Priority No.7. He also outlined progress that was made during 2020 regarding a number of Designated Urban Centres Grant Schemes (DUCG's) including Tullamore, Mullingar, Sligo, Dundalk and Galway.

Cllr. Declan McDonnell questioned whether the wheelchair access was adequate on the proposed Salmon Weir pedestrian bridge in Galway city. Mr. David Minton Director stated that the Operational Programme funded the projects involved but matters such as disabled access needed to be included in the design of any project and would be the subject of consultation under the planning process. Cllr. Brian McKenna questioned how these projects received this funding. He questioned whether it was an application to a Council or were they advertised. He added that he would love Monaghan to benefit from some of these initiatives. Mr David Minton clarified that these funds were allocated under the National Spatial Strategy which focused on a seven designated urban Gateways. Mr Minton stated that there may be further opportunities for funding under the recently launched React EU Scheme. He added that funding proposed under React EU was also not solely focused on Urban Centres so there would be more possibilities for projects throughout the region.

European Capital of Culture 2020 / 2021

Cllr McDonnell referred to Galway City's title as European Capital of Culture for 2020 which was severely impacted by Covid 19. He referred to an application to have the title returned for another year and he stated this would benefit the entire region. Cllr Tim Broderick stated that he was completely opposed to any more funds being allocated to Galway's European Capital of Culture as he considered that there had been serious issues with the project from its inception. Cllr Jimmy McClearn agreed with Cllr Broderick and stated that there was a lot of money allocated to the project and not much to show for it. Cllr. McClearn said it was a tragedy as the project could have shown the region in a positive light if it had been successful. Cllr. Joe Sheridan stated that it was a pity the way it ended and he would support an extension of funds but with more oversight. Cllr Christy Hyland stated the project had been beset with controversy from the outset.

Cllr Niall McNelis stated that Galway's title of European Capital of Culture is a title that will be seen in a positive light for years to come. He added that if Covid 19 had not been an issue it would have been seen as being very positive for the entire region. He stated that he fully supported the title returning as it will be very advantageous particularly for the creative industry and for job creation for the region.

5. Correspondence

Post 2020 Update

Mr David Minton discussed the National Development Plan and noted correspondence received by the Minister. He thanked all involved in the Lets Be More Campaign which assisted in securing the NWRA's status as a Managing Authority. He emphasised the importance of keeping the funds management as close to local needs as possible. Mr Minton also highlighted the importance of the EU's Green Deal as an opportunity for the region to be a leader in this area. An outline of our requested submission would be made at the January Meeting.

National Development Plan & Western Rail Corridor

Mr David Minton informed the members that the Assembly was in contact the Minister Ryan regarding the National Development Plan and Western Rail Corridor to request a meeting with him, preferably in person, regarding the project. Cllr. Tim Broderick stated that the recent Western Rail Corridor report was very disappointing and that it was important that a report be compiled to show support for the Western Rail Corridor. Cllr Jimmy McClearn stated that it was vital to get a meeting with the Minister as the Minister has already indicated his support of the Western Rail Corridor, which has not always been the case with previous Ministers. The Cathaoirleach is to liaise with the Minister about Assembly participation.

Digital Hubs

Cathaoirleach David Maxwell referred to a matter raised by Cllr Niall McNelis regarding digital hubs in the region. The Cathaoirleach stated that there was to be 3 digital hubs to be set up in the country and that at least one should be in the region. Cathaoirleach confirmed he had been in correspondence with An Tanaiste. He emphasised the importance of such hubs for the transfer of knowledge. The Cathaoirleach requested that the Director explore the most effective way to support our stakeholders in making an application.

6. Any other business

Vaccine Roll Out

Cllr David Collins made a query relating to the Covid 19 vaccine roll out. He acknowledged that the NWRA had no direct role in the roll out of the vaccine, however, he would like some clarity or some of the logistics of the roll out of the vaccine. He stated that members of the public are worried and were asking for clarity and to ensure that there will be equal access to the vaccine location wise when the time comes. Mr David Minton emphasised that the NWRA had no direct role in the vaccine roll out however he acknowledged the Assembly's possible value in a communication role if they were informed of any information regarding the vaccine roll out. Cllr. Collins stated he would be grateful for any information from the Assembly regarding this issue.

Cllr. Jimmy McClearn asked for an update on the Connaught Ulster Alliance. He noted that other regions had moved ahead with their technological Universities and we were at risk of being left behind. Cllr. McClearn emphasized the importance of the title of the University for students seeking employment internationally. A written update would be welcomed.

Motion Received from Cllr Donal Gilroy

"That The Northern and Western Regional Assembly call on The Taoiseach Micheal Martin TD, the Minister for Transport Eamon Ryan TD and The Minister of State for International and Road Transport

and Logistics Hildegard Naughton TD to work with Sligo County Council, the board of Sligo Airport and this Assembly to ensure that the necessary finances are put in place to ensure that the Airport can continue to be used as the base for search and Rescue service 118.”

Cllr. Donal Gilroy stated that Sligo Airport needs funds of €500,000 to ensure the continuation of service. Cllr. Gilroy highlighted the importance of the airport as a base for Irish Coast Guard Search and Rescue. Funding is not being allocated as Sligo airport is not classified as a regional airport. Nothing has been received from the government since 2011. Cllr. Gilroy noted that Waterford airport got funding and that Sligo Airport should be treated the same. Cllr Gilroy asked for support. Cllr Declan Bree added that the airport is significant employer for the area. He stated that it is an important infrastructure for entire region and that it was not a huge amount of money to ask for. He added that it was unfair to not give the money it was a once off payment and was completely reasonable to expect the funds to be given. Cllr. Joe Sheridan stated that the airport is also used by Medivac which is vital in the region, he also added that Search and Rescue services was vital to our fishing communities. Cllr. Enda McGloin emphasized the importance of the location of the airport as central location of the region. He added his support. Cllr. Orla Leyden stated that it was essential, and that the investment would save lives. Cllr. Patrick McGowan also added support stating that the airport also covers Donegal.

Proposed by: Cllr. Donal Gilroy

Seconded by: Cllr Declan Bree

The motion was agreed unanimously

Motion Received from Cllr. Orla Leyden

“That the NWRA calls on the Government to support the Planet Youth initiative by financing a Leisure Card as a pilot project to enhance the health and well-being of young people in the Western region and to address the risk of drugs and alcohol abuse.”

Cllr. Orla Leyden explained to the proposal to introduce a Leisure Card for 6-18 year olds that could be used for physical activities in the Galway, Roscommon and Mayo areas. The leisure card initiative was in use in Iceland and had huge success in increasing wellbeing of those who availed of the service.

Motion was seconded by Cllr Declan McDonnell.

The motion was agreed unanimously

Next Meeting

After some discussion it was agreed that the next Assembly Meeting would be held on 22nd January 2021. Cllr. David Maxwell, Cathaoirleach acknowledged the issues that occurred with holding the meeting both physically and online. He stated that he hoped that the next meeting would be able to be held completely in person. The Cathaoirleach also wished everyone a Happy and Safe Christmas.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed: _____
Cathaoirleach

Date : _____