

Minutes of the Northern & Western Regional Assembly Meeting held on 21st of May 2021 on Zoom at 11am

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**Present:**

Cllr. Declan Bree	Cllr. Sean Smith	Cllr. Brian McKenna
Cllr. Tim Broderick	Cllr. Donal Lyons	Cllr. Niall McNelis
Cllr. Jarlath Munnely	Cllr. Enda Stenson	Cllr. Jack Murray
Cllr. John Naughten	Cllr. Jimmy McClearn	Cllr. Enda McGloin
Cllr. Christy Hyland	Cllr. Declan McDonnell	Cllr. Michael Crowe
Cllr. Orla Leyden	Cllr. Patrick McGowan	Cllr. Frank McBrearty
Cllr. David Collins	Cllr. Donal Gilroy	Cllr. Joe Sheridan
	Cllr. Justin Warnock	

Cllr. David Maxwell **PRESIDED**

**Apologies:** Cllr. Craig Lovett, Cllr. John Caulfield

**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 Frank Flanagan Senior Executive Planner  
Ms Catriona Meehan Clerical Officer

**Designated Chief Executive for NWRA**

Mr Brendan McGrath Chief Executive Galway City Council

1. **Review of Supplementary Standing Orders (circulated) Regulating the proceedings of the Assembly when holding remote meetings.**

**Proposed by:** Cllr. Donal Lyons

**Seconded by:** Cllr. Enda Stenson

And

*'Resolved " that supplementary standing orders be adopted for a further month to include the May 2021 meeting of the Regional Assembly.'*

2. **Adoption of the Minutes of the Meeting of the Northern & Western Regional Assembly held on the 16<sup>th</sup> of April 2021 (circulated):**

**Proposed by:** Cllr. Donal Lyons

**Seconded by:** Cllr. Declan McDonnell

**Resolved:**

*"That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Northern & Western Regional Assembly held on 16<sup>th</sup> of April 2021 be adopted".*

### **3. Any Matters Arising**

Cllr. Tim Broderick enquired whether there was any progress on the item recorded in April's minutes regarding the Assembly assisting individual Local Authorities accessing EU Funds.

Mr David Minton Director advised that the NWRA were further expanding supports to individual Local Authorities through an EU learning and development programme. Under preparation was also a dedicated EU funding guide. He added that the NWRA would propose to collaborate individually with each Council also and to continue to inform them regarding EU calls for funding applications as they arise.

### **4. Planning and Economic Development:**

#### **a) *Presentation by Mr Conor O'Dowd, CEO, Port of Galway – Inner Harbour Plans (included as Appendix 1 to the Minutes)***

Mr Denis Kelly, Assistant Director & Senior Planner, welcomed Mr O'Dowd and set the context of the presentation within the regional framework of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy. He advised that the RSES acknowledges that the sustainable expansion and upgrade of Galway Harbour and Port represents a key strategic priority for the region. He highlighted that the RSES advocates for a feasibility study for pursuing designation of the port as EU TEN-T Comprehensive Port – subject to necessary compliance with EU Habitats Directive. He further identified that the RSES contained a number of strong policy objectives supporting the redevelopment of Galway Port and Harbour area as part of the overall vision to grow Galway City Region.

Mr Brendan McGrath Designated Chief Executive stated that the Ministerial shareholding for Galway Port Company is now vested in Galway City Council and that the Council were hugely supportive of the proposals for Galway Port.

Mr O'Dowd gave a detailed presentation on proposals for the Inner Harbour – see Appendix 1).

#### **Questions and Comments from Members**

There was widespread support for the plans among the Elected Members. Members thanked Mr O'Dowd for the presentation and queried whether there was any way they Assembly could show their support.

Cllr. Jimmy McClearn stated that he feared that the Galway Port Authorities may have to deal with some negativity regarding the proposals, but he felt the proposals were critical for the development of Galway and the region.

Cllr. Joe Sheridan asked for more details regarding the proposal for servicing offshore wind energy. He also highlighted the importance of connectivity with all areas in Galway City and its environs.

Mr Conor O'Dowd thanked the members for their support and responded to Cllr. McClearn's query stating that he believed the project had received mostly positive feedback. Mr O'Dowd added that the project was in line with the NPF's vision, and it has been acknowledged that Port infrastructure in Ireland needs to be improved. In response to Cllr. Sheridan's query he stated that in the plan there is a focus on expanding the city centre and encouraging people to the Dock area in a way that will improve connectivity for the City and benefit the entire City region. With regards to offshore wind Mr O'Dowd stated that Galway Port was in an important position along the Atlantic Ocean to capitalise on this and could maximise the benefits of technology to deliver realistic proposals for wind energy for the region.

Mr David Minton Director thanked Mr O'Dowd and stated that the proposals as outlined presented a very bold vision and were very welcome. He added that the Assembly was working closely with the Port on many matters. He also commented that the Port redevelopment proposals spoke to many of the objectives in the RSES.

Cllr. Niall McNelis proposed a motion to show support for the Port development.

**Proposed:** Cllr. Niall McNelis

**Seconded:** Cllr. Declan McDonnell

and

**Resolved:**

*"The NWRA welcome and supports the Masterplan development and encourage engagement with the public consultation exercise".*

The motion was unanimously agreed.

**(b) Submission to the Department of Transport consultation on National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (NIFTI) (circulated)**

Mr Conall McGettigan, Senior Executive Planner, presented the NWRA's submission towards the NIFTI consultation process (see Appendix 2) – a copy of which had been emailed previously to Members in advance of the meeting. Mr McGettigan advised the submission emphasized that the region needed positive discrimination as it was now classified by the EC as a region in transition. Mr McGettigan highlighted the issue of 'lifeline routes' which are routes of vital importance in an area. He stated that the submission proposed that these routes be prioritised and not treated like regular routes. Mr McGettigan outlined that the submission also highlighted the weak urban infrastructure and the unique disconnectedness of our region, this was reinforced by the status of our Ports, and the advent of Brexit.

Cllr Patrick McGowan raised the issue of Donegal having two transport centres – Donegal Town & Letterkenny. He suggested that Ballybofey/Stranorlar should be included as it was a hub connecting the bus network.

Cllr. Frank McBrearty agreed with Cllr. McGowan on this matter.

Cllr Donal Gilroy stated that he was aware that this submission would not highlight specific projects however he highlighted certain routes in Sligo that would benefit from a dual carriage way as a priority.

Cllr Brian McKenna queried whether the Ulster Canal could also be looked at as there would be many benefits including tourism and carbon emissions reduction from developing it.

Mr McGettigan confirmed that the region is behind in terms of road infrastructure, he said he would check to see if the Ulster Canal could be included, as there was no reference to waterways within the NIFTI consultation as far as he was aware.

Mr Denis Kelly highlighted that the consultation specified that the purpose of the framework was not to propose specific projects but that many issues raised had been identified in the RSES and that the submission was including those objectives within the document where appropriate. He advised that the issue raised by Cllrs McGowan and McBrearty were not a fit for this consultation but that other opportunities may arise for this to be raised going forward. He confirmed to Cllr Gilroy that the N17/N15 was captured within Regional Ask 6 and suggested that the RPO with regards the Ulster Canal could be included as a Transport Objective as requested by Cllr McKenna.

**Proposed:** Cllr. Donal Gilroy

**Seconded:** Cllr. Donal Lyons

Resolved:

*'The Northern and Western Regional Assembly will make the submission as circulated to the Members to the NIFTI consultation process'.*

**5. Future of Europe**

Mr David Minton made a presentation around the citizen led consultation to take place regarding the Future of Europe. He outlined the positive items that the European Union has been involved in, in recent years, including the response to the Covid 19 crisis. He highlighted that there is now a plan to engage more meaningfully with the public through Citizens Assemblies. The Assemblies will focus on what the citizens would like to see improved and what the vision for the future of Europe should be.

Cllr. Declan McDonnell (CoR member) highlighted the importance of the European Union. He stated that it was hoped that by engaging with citizens and listening to their views that this will stop the spread of disinformation which was damaging to the EU. Cllr. McDonnell said he hoped that by engagement with the pan European network and through the vast wealth of experience available in this country that this would benefit Europe. He stated that trust among citizens is higher at the regional level when compared to the European level. Cllr. McDonnell highlighted that this was a great opportunity to engage with citizens on a ground level to build a Europe which is better and stronger. Cllr. McDonnell stated that there will be Citizens' Assemblies in each region and that Councillor's input was very welcome. He added that there was a small fund to host these assemblies but that he hoped NWRA could match the amount allocated.

There was unanimous support for the Citizen Assembly outlined.

**6. AOB**

Cllr. Frank Mc Brearty raised the issue of the Mica redress scheme. He stated that the scheme was not effective and encouraged the Assembly to push for an improved scheme. Cllr. McBrearty highlighted the huge number of homes affected and stated that it was an issue of national importance.

There was unanimous agreement that this issue needed to be discussed. It was decided that the issue will appear on the Agenda for June's Assembly meeting.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Cathaoirleach

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