

**Minutes of the Northern & Western Regional Assembly Meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2022 at 11am in the  
NWRA Chamber, Ballaghaderreen.**

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**Present:**

Cllr. David Maxwell	Cllr. Tim Broderick	Cllr. Jimmy McClearn
Cllr. Frank McBrearty	Cllr. Declan McDonnell	Cllr. Patrick McGowan
Cllr. Orla Leyden	Cllr. Brian McKenna	Cllr. Jarlath Munnelly
Cllr. Joe Sheridan		

**Presided:** Cllr. Christy Hyland (Cathaoirleach)

**Apologies:** Cllr. Sean Smith, Cllr. John Caulfield, Cllr. Clifford Kelly, Cllr. Michael Crowe, Cllr. Donal Lyons, Cllr. Enda McGloin, Cllr. Donal Gilroy, Cllr. Niall McNelis, Cllr. Declan Bree, Cllr. David Collins, Cllr. Enda Stenson, Cllr. Jack Murray, Cllr. John Naughten Cllr. Justin Warnock.  
Mr Brendan McGrath (Chief Executive Galway City Council)

**Officials: Northern & Western Regional Assembly:**

Mr David Minton (Director)  
Mr Denis Kelly (Assistant Director & Senior Planner)  
Mr Gerry Doyle (Assistant Director)  
Mr Brendan Mooney (Programme Executive)  
Ms Briege Shannon (Senior Staff Officer, HR, Corporate and Finance)  
Mr Conall McGettigan (Senior Executive Planner)  
Ms Catriona Meehan (Clerical Officer)  
Ms Fiona Timoney (Clerical Officer)

**1) Adoption of the Minutes of the Meeting of the Northern & Western Regional Assembly held on the 20<sup>th</sup> May 2022 (circulated):**

It was noted that Cllr. Brian McKenna was marked as absent from the meeting, however he was in attendance.

It was agreed the attendance would be updated and minute of the meeting be amended to reflect same.

**Proposed by:** Cllr. Jimmy McClearn

**Seconded by:** Cllr. Brian Mc Kenna

**Resolved:**

*"That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Northern & Western Regional Assembly held on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2022 be adopted including amendment agreed".*

**2) Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising

**3) Planning and Economic Development**

**a) Planning Reports**

**i. SID Application to ABP for North Connacht 110kV Project (Report Circulated) (Slides at Appendix 1)**

Mr Conall McGettigan provided a brief outline of the report as circulated. Members questioned why cables weren't underground for the North-South Inter-connector, when it is feasible for the current project and suggested that Eirgrid and ESB networks be asked to reconsider their position on the N/S inter-connector. Denis Kelly advised that this project should be considered on its own merits, whilst acknowledging the query raised on the North-South Interconnector. Following deliberations, it was agreed that this proposal should be considered as outlined in the report and that the North-South Interconnector should be raised as a matter arising, with correspondence to

issue to Eirgrid expressing that they support the current project but in doing so believe that EIRGRID should reconsider its decision not to underground the North-South Interconnector. Denis Kelly advised that although a separate, but perhaps related matter, under Action 102 of the Climate Action Plan 2021 measures have been agreed by government to develop a planning policy framework for onshore renewable electricity generation development (sites of scale for solar and wind are the principal focus). The Assemblies have a role to play in this and this role should become clearer over the coming period, to the extent that perhaps in September a report could be brought to them. This work may require input from EIRGRID/ESB Networks and Members may have an opportunity to invite them to a meeting.

**Proposed:** Cllr Jarlath Munnely

**Seconded:** Cllr Jimmy McClearn

**Resolved:**

‘That the Northern and Western Regional Assembly endorse the report as circulated and decide to make a submission as outlined in the report’

**Proposed:** Cllr Brian McKenna

**Seconded:** Cllr David Maxwell

‘That the Assembly write to Eirgrid requesting that all electricity power transmission lines be undergrounded and to reconsider the decision not to underground the North-South Interconnector’

**Proposed:** Cllr. Brian McKenna

**Seconded:** Cllr. David Maxwell

ii. **Proposed Material Contravention of the Sligo County Development Plan 2017 – 2023 (as varied) – Easkey Glamping Village: Planning Application Ref: 22/133 (Report circulated) (Slides Appendix 1)**

Mr Conall McGettigan gave a presentation on the report as circulated, outlining that it was considered that the proposal was consistent with the RSES.

**Proposed:** Cllr. Declan McDonnell

**Seconded:** Cllr. David Maxwell

**Resolved**

*‘That Members endorse the report and decide to make a submission to the proposed variation to the Sligo County Development Plan 2017 – 2023 (as varied), in accordance with the circulated report’*

**b) Update on 2 Year Review (Appendix 1)**

Mr Conall McGettigan gave a presentation that outlined the progress made thus far, stating that the majority of those consulted had responded. The slides highlighted the Public Bodies and Local Authorities who had not responded as of yet. He acknowledged that workload pressure was a factor in the delay from Local Authorities. He stated that the members would be notified when the review was complete.

Mr Denis Kelly advised that it was intended to proceed with finalising a draft report for Members for the September Monthly Meeting.

**4) Presentation by Caroline Creamer National University of Ireland Maynooth - The 21st Century Councillor in Irish Local Government (Slides at Appendix 2)**

Ms Caroline Creamer expressed her gratitude for her accommodation at the Assembly meeting adding that interaction and discussion on this topic was important. She added that it was important now more than ever to have the Councillors voice heard. Ms Creamer stated that studies had been done in the past and in different countries, but this survey would go beyond the role of the councillor in an ever-changing world. She noted that councillors are the bedrock of governance but most of the public do not realise the

full scope and depth of what is involved with being a councillor. Ms Creamer explained the importance of this study and the follow up interviews in making sure the Councillors voice is heard. She paid particular focus on the impact the role of the councillor has on one's personal life, acknowledging that working hours are often non-existent.

#### AILG Survey Topics/Themes

- Role of the Councillor
- Challenges facing councillors
- Implications of reforms and reconfigurations
- Possible innovations
- Tools and skills

Ms Creamer encouraged councillors that hadn't already done so to complete the survey to ensure their voice was heard and formed an input into the final survey. She asked councillors how they would describe the role of a Councillor, was it the same as you envisaged when first starting the role or had it changed over the years, what are the greatest challenges and what are the barriers to those entering the role at present. Ms Creamer asked members was there any tools, skills or training they feel would benefit their role. She stated that all this would be captured in the survey. Ms Creamer added that any Councillor who was willing to be interviewed should get in touch.

#### Questions and Comments from Councillors

- Cllr. David Maxwell, as a member of AILG, encouraged members to complete the survey he stated that this was an opportunity to challenge the Moorehead report. He said this direct data from councillors was important to gather.
- Members explained that councillors are getting surveys constantly and that perhaps survey fatigue could impact response rate. It was added that perhaps there was a question of the impact of these surveys as there is often very little effect from these studies.
- It was stated that the influence and power of Councillors is reducing. The dilution of the role but the increase in expectations in recent years was noted.
- Members expressed frustration that so much work can go into development plans only for it to be dismissed by outside forces.
- It was stated by some members that although the old town council system had its' flaws it also had its good point.
- It was noted that the balance of local government did not reflect our status as a Region in Transition. The CRU was noted as not being representative of this region.
- Members emphasised the lack of a social life in the role.
- It was noted that some external Councillors had expressed concern that due to the structure of the survey people could be identified even though the survey is supposed to be confidential.
- The dilution of the role but the increase in expectations in recent years was noted.

Ms Creamer acknowledged members comments she added that the part of the survey that could be used to identify councillors were optional and if councillors were wary of this element, they did not need to complete these sections. She again encouraged Members to complete the survey stating that if there was any queries Brendan or herself could be contacted by the details at the end of the presentation.

#### **5) Update: ERDF Programme 2021-2027**

Mr Gerry Doyle informed Members that the Draft programme had been submitted informally to the Commission. He stated that there had been some informal queries but that the Assembly would be in a position to respond to all these queries without having to make major amendments to the Draft discussed at the May meeting.

6) **Correspondence**

Mr Gerry Doyle informed members that a response had been received arising from the request to meet the Taoiseach or Tánaiste regarding the lack of investment in the region. He stated that the response detailed that the Taoiseach was not in a position to meet Assembly members, but it was suggested that the Minister for Housing Darragh O'Brien TD would be in a position to attend. Members expressed disappointment that the Taoiseach could not meet them.

Mr David Minton stated that the reasons for the meeting request had been outlined in the correspondence to the Taoiseach's office. He stated that he was happy to take direction from the Members adding that Members help in securing a meeting would be gratefully accepted.

7) **Any other business**

Members discussed the hosting of future Assembly meetings; the following comments were expressed:

- The issue of connectivity on remote meetings was highlighted.
- The poor condition of the NWRA building was emphasized.
- Some Members expressed a preference for a blended option for meetings, it was added that perhaps each member could attend a certain percentage of remote meetings per meeting. It was added that some form of blended option was important for diversity in future Assemblies. The benefit of allowing the public to view Assembly meetings was also mentioned as being important for the dissemination of the work the Assembly does.
- Other members stated that meetings should be fully physical, as they were preferable in relation to contributing to debate at meetings
- The low level of attendance at the meeting was highlighted, it was suggested that if there was an option of blended meetings, then eventually everyone may choose to attend online.

Mr David Minton stated that the building was not owned by the Assembly, so any improvements or maintenance had to be completed by the landlord. He added that there was a meeting with the Assembly Members Building Committee scheduled for the following Monday and that there would be an update given to Members at the July meeting.

It was noted that this committee was established before COVID-19 and some members had been omitted from the invitation to Monday's meeting in error. David Minton apologised for this and stated that they would be invited to all future meetings.

Mr David Minton informed members of the very positive news that a European Digital Hub is to be located in our region. He recognised the hard work that had gone into the joint application. He commended members who had done great work to achieve this result. Mr Minton stated that this achievement would aid greatly towards the objectives of the RSES.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Cathaoirleach)      Date: \_\_\_\_\_