

**Minutes of the Northern & Western Regional Assembly Meeting
held on 18th November 2022 at 11am in the Roscommon County Council Chamber, Roscommon Town.**

Present:

Cllr. David Maxwell	Cllr. John Naughten	Cllr. Jimmy McClearn
Cllr. Tim Broderick	Cllr. Declan McDonnell	Cllr. Patrick McGowan
Cllr. Orla Leyden	Cllr. Brian McKenna	Cllr. Jarlath Munnelly
Cllr. Joe Sheridan	Cllr. Justin Warnock	Cllr. Niall McNelis
Cllr. Christy Hyland	Cllr. Clifford Kelly	Cllr. Donal Gilroy
Cllr. Enda McGloin	Cllr. Jack Murray	Cllr. Donal Lyons

Presided: Cllr. David Collins (Cathaoirleach)

Apologies: Cllr. Declan Bree, Cllr. Enda Stenson, Cllr. Sean Smith, Cllr. John Caulfield, Cllr. Michael Crowe, Cllr. Frank McBrearty, Mr Brendan McGrath (Chief Executive Galway City Council)

Officials: Northern & Western Regional Assembly:

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

1) Adoption of the Minutes of the Meeting of the Northern & Western Regional Assembly held on the 21st of October 2022 (Circulated):

Proposed by: Cllr. Donal Gilroy
Seconded by: Cllr. Declan McDonnell

Resolved:

“That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Northern & Western Regional Assembly held on 21st of October 2022 be adopted”.

2) Matters Arising

There were no matters arising

3) Draft Budget for financial year ending 31st of December 2023 (Circulated) (Presentation at Appendix 1)

Mr Gerry Doyle presented the Draft Budget for 2023 (copy of presentation attached as Appendix 1). Members acknowledged the work of the Assembly in operating on a limited budget.

Mr David Minton acknowledged that the budget for the Assembly was less than the other two regions, but he stated that the aim was to keep the budget as low as possible so as not to be too much of a burden on our Local Authorities. He stated that any funding opportunities the Assembly become aware of are notified to the local authorities.

Proposed: Cllr. David Maxwell
Seconded: Cllr. Donal Lyons

Resolved:

‘That Members adopt the Draft Budget for the financial year ending the 31st of December 2023’

4) **Planning and Economic Development**

a) **URBACT National Partnership Transfer Initiative (NPTI) Playful Towns – Presentation by Karl Murphy (URBACT National Contact Point) and Leonora McConville (Sligo CoCo – Network Partner) – (Slides at Appendix 2)**

Mr Karl Murphy outlined how URBACT works and who it involves. He also summarized the National Practice Transfer initiative (NPTI). He urged Members to reach out and make contact if they have any questions or queries. He stated that the next call will be the 9th January - 31st March 2023.

Ms Leonora McConville introduced the Playful towns initiative, she used Sligo as an example of this initiative. Leonora emphasised the importance of placemaking. She outlined the challenges and the benefits of taking part in the initiative.

Mr David Minton thanked Karl and Leonora for their informative presentation. He highlighted the importance of making town centres functional friendly places adding that this would benefit the local area including local businesses. Mr Minton emphasized the importance of URBACT for all LAs stating that the best practice experience of this initiative should be used to inform LAs policy frameworks..

Members raised a number of points/questions, including:

- Members praised the initiative and gave wide support for this initiative.
- Members enquired how they might find out more information for their own Local Authority.
- It was queried how to promote playful and safe but not attract anti-social behaviour.
- Members queried whether the youth were consulted on this initiative.
- The importance of sensory parks was noted.
- It was noted that this was a great way to bring life back into town centres.
- Members queried was there any resistance to the closing of streets etc, in Sligo for the Playful Towns Initiative.
- Examples of good playgrounds were highlighted.
- Were there any maintenance costs for the project and if so who would pay.
- The issue of weather for this sort of project was noted.
- Members enquired whether there was any move to incorporate this initiative into existing local festivals
- It was queried whether smaller town were also included in this initiative.
- Members enquired could the presentation be sent onto them.

Responses

Mr Murphy and Ms McConville noted that this initiative was in its infancy and would hopefully be expanding further in future. They thanked members for their enthusiasm for the project adding that their feedback will be important for the future development of the project. It was confirmed that the youth were not consulted for the past projects but perhaps this could be incorporated in future events. They stated that there was no antisocial behaviour observed at any of the events to date and added that there would be Gardaí present at any larger events.

Ms McConville advised that there was no incorporation of Sensory Parks as the structures were very temporary and the inclusion of sensory areas would require more permanent structures. Following on from that point she stated that due to their temporary nature there were also no maintenance costs as all items were rented. She confirmed that there was no linking with festivals in this phase but might be possible in the future phases. Ms McConville informed Members that there had been no resistance to the road closures needed, noting that the events were held on Sundays.

Mr Murphy advised that smaller towns were being looked at in relation to RRDF and he pointed to Strandhill and Enniscrone as examples. He added that this was just the start of the journey to encourage increased use of our town centres.

The Cathaoirleach David Collins thanked Ms McConville and Mr Murphy for their attendance and their clear presentation.

b) North Connaught 110kv Project – Eirgrid: Report on Significant Additional Information (ABP Ref: ABP – 313724-22) (Circulated 14th November 2022)

Mr Denis Kelly informed members that the report had been furnished to them during the week and that it advises that there is consistency with the RSES.

Proposed: Cllr. Donal Lyons

Seconded: Cllr. Niall McNelis

Resolved:

‘that Members endorse the report and resolve to make a submission as outlined in the report’

c) Report on Proposed Material Alterations to the Leitrim CDP 2023-2029 (Appendix 3)

Mr Conall McGettigan outlined the contents of the report to the proposed material alterations to the Leitrim CDP 2023-2029 – which was circulated to Members on 14th November 2022. He summarised the findings made including, the reduction of text in plans and the recommendations, that there should be a joint plan between Roscommon and Leitrim in relation to Carrick on Shannon. He complimented the detailed maps in the plan.

Comments from Members

- Members queried the level of zoning in the plan

Mr McGettigan stated that the level of zoning was not the issue but that the zoning in the joint plan should be done in conjunction with Roscommon County Council.

Mr Denis Kelly complimented the level of consistency with the RSES adding that is great to see plans being realigned with the RSES.

Proposed: Cllr. Justin Warnock

Seconded: Cllr. Enda McGloin

Resolved:

‘that Members endorse the report and to make submission as outlined in the report on Proposed Material Alterations to the Leitrim CDP 2023-2029’

d) Report on Draft Forestry Strategies (Appendix 3)

Mr Frank Flanagan outlined a summary of the Draft Forestry Strategies (Slides at Appendix 2). He stated that the focus of the report was the right trees in the right place for the right reason with right management. Mr Flanagan outlined the targets set out in the report, he acknowledged that Leitrim has a high concentration of forestry, this was illustrated by maps detailing the forestry concentration by county. Mr Flanagan highlighted that there was very little discussion on the impact on the road networks from forestry developments and other social issues in rural areas.

Comments from Members

- While the benefits for rural areas and remote farmers were acknowledged, it was highlighted that there were issues with the over concentration of afforestation in certain areas.
- Issues with flooding was highlighted

- Members raised the impact on the rural roads network.
- Some Members expressed disappointment that there was not more focus on the over exploitation of the region in regard to Forestry. A request was made that the Assembly would make a submission outlining the position that Forestry has been heavily concentrated in certain areas of the Region, and it is having an impact upon many areas of rural life.
- Biodiversity loss was highlighted and the negative impact of blanket plantation of monoculture alien species was emphasized as have disastrous impacts.
- Clear-felling was also noted as have terrible impacts and that Sitka Spruce trees cannot be thinned effectively. These trees require plantation very close together to grow straight which means any thinning or tree fall of any trees in an area will cause the trees around it to fall also.
- It was stated that the timber grown in most of these plantations would not be of high quality.
- The damage to rivers and lakes near plantations were raised.
- The issue of licenses and the length of it time takes to get a licence to fell was highlighted.
- Some members stated that is important that forestry is still accessible to landowners.

Mr Flanagan emphasised that this was an analysis of the Draft Strategy and not a submission. He said a submission could be made if the Members requested it.

The Cathaoirleach suggested that Members send any contributions to form a submission to the Strategy. Denis Kelly asked that any submissions/contribution be made directly to Frank Flanagan or himself on/before Tuesday 20th and that any submission shall be agreed with the Cathaoirleach before being issued.

Cllr Warnock emphasised that the key point should be that there needs to be an even geographical spread for forestry targets.

5) Conference/Training event update

Cllr. Declan McDonnell outlined the Association of Irish Regions event which will be held in the Four Seasons Hotel in Monaghan on the 7th -9th of February. He stated that there will be a number of high-profile attendees. Cllr. McDonnell noted that the event was a collaboration of the three Regional Assemblies. He encouraged all Members to attend as the theme is balanced regional development.

6) Any Other Business

Motion:

“This Assembly (NWRA) propose and fully support Cancer Care West and the National Breast Cancer Research Institute in their proposed development of Cancer Centre for the West and North West of Ireland and seek the immediate appointment of a design team to progress a fit for purpose cancer hospital at UHG and build complimentary cancer care infrastructure at regional hospitals in accordance with balanced regional development a cancer care network for the Saolta region (West, North-West) with a Cancer Centre at Galway University Hospital with appropriate infrastructure will be delivered (National Development Plan 2021 – 30)”

Proposed: Cllr. Donal Lyons

Seconded: Cllr. Niall Mc Nelis and Cllr. Declan McDonnell

Resolved

‘that the Assembly will send the agreed motion to the Department of Health, the HSE, An Taoiseach and An Tánaiste’



Members also requested that Cancer Care West could be invited to the next Assembly meeting.

Mr Minton stated that he would try and arrange this for the next meeting or perhaps the first meeting of 2023.

It was confirmed that the next meeting will be held on the 16th of December in the Chamber in Roscommon County Council

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed: _____ **(Cathaoirleach)**

Date: _____