

Minutes of the Northern & Western Regional Assembly Meeting
held on 16th of December 2022 at 11am online via Ms Teams.

Present:

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

Presided: Cllr. David Collins (Cathaoirleach)

Apologies: Cllr. Patrick McGowan, Cllr. Sean Smith, Cllr. John Caulfield, Cllr. Michael Crowe, Cllr. Frank McBrearty, Cllr. Enda McGloin, 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. 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 18th November 2022 (Circulated):

Cllr. Donal Lyons noted that the motion passed at Novembers meeting regarding support for locating the Cancer Care West Centre at Galway University Hospital had been seconded by both Cllr. Declan McDonnell and Cllr. Niall Mc Nelis and he stated that the motion in question had also been forwarded to all Local Authorities in the region.

Proposed by: Cllr. Donal Lyons

Seconded by: Cllr. Orla Leyden

Resolved:

“That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Northern & Western Regional Assembly held on 18th November 2022 be adopted including amendment proposed”.

2) Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

3) Presentation from Mr. Richard Flaherty, Chief Executive, Cancer Care West

Mr. Flaherty emphasised that patients and their families have always been at the centre of Cancer Care West’s work. He stated that having available transport and accommodation took some of the burden off patients and their families who have enough to deal with as it is. He outlined the services provided at the Cancer Support Centres in Galway and Letterkenny. These services include counselling for adults and children. Mr Flaherty thanked Members for their time and invited any questions or feedback.

Comments from Members

- Members thanked Mr. Flaherty for his presentation and time.
- Many Members expressed gratitude for Cancer Care West and the great work they have done over the years. Some Members outlined their personal experience with the organisation.

- The urgent need for substantial funding to expand Cancer Care services was also expressed by a number of members.
- Members acknowledged the great effort of all the volunteers involved.
- Members expressed shock at the low level of finance provided by the Government and the over reliance on fund raising. There was unanimous agreement that something needed to be done and that support needs to be shown for the organisation. It was suggested that a motion should be sent to the Department to encourage more funding be directed to Cancer Care West.

Proposed: Cllr. David Collins

Seconded: Cllr. Donal Lyons and

Unanimously agreed that the following Motion be adopted and should be sent to the HSE and the Minister for Health for further action

'The Northern and Western Regional Assembly unanimously support the work of Cancer Care West and believe that funding allocated to them is inadequate and should be increased substantially to reflect the essential nature of the work they do'.

4) **Corporate Affairs**

a) **Presentation of Annual Financial Statement (Audited) for 2021 – for adoption.**

Mr Gerry Doyle Assistant Director presented the Audited Annual Financial Statement (AFS) for 2021. Mr Doyle stated that the Annual Financial Statement which had previously been presented to Members in September had since been audited by the Local Government Audit Service and was found to be an accurate representation of the 2021 accounts.

Proposed: Cllr. Donal Lyons

Seconded: Cllr. Orla Leyden and

Resolved that:

'Members adopt the Audited Annual Financial Statement for 2021'

b) **Presentation of Annual Report 2021**

Mr Doyle presented the Annual Report 2021 and he outlined some of the highlights of our work in 2021.

Mr David Minton highlighted the fantastic effort put in to secure European projects highlighting how important these were for the Region. He stated the responsibilities of the Assembly have significantly increased since the Assembly's foundation and he highlighted some key projects announced recently. Mr Minton emphasised the huge level of work required to get these projects off the ground. He also highlighted the advocacy and engagement work by Assembly staff which he stated was also hugely important. Mr Minton stated that the Assembly is increasingly being included in policy discussions regarding positive discrimination towards our region which is beginning to have a dividend for the region. He stated that there is work going on to update the current workforce plan to more adequately reflect the current and future needs of the Assembly.

Proposed: Cllr. Donal Lyons

Seconded: Cllr. Orla Leyden

Resolved that:

'Members adopt the Annual Report for 2021'

c) **Building update – for noting**

Mr Minton explained that the Assembly had moved to Dillon House on a short-term lease from Roscommon County Council. He thanked the Members for their support in the move. Mr Minton also thanked the team in Corporate Services for the work put in to make the move as smooth as

possible. He added that the Assembly would continue to look for a long-term location in Ballaghaderreen from which we would be based.

Cllr. Orla Leyden noted that the agreement for the move to Dillon House was made with the formal approval of Roscommon County Council, at a recent Council meeting.

5) Planning and Economic Development

a) 2 Year RSES Implementation Report – Update

Mr Denis Kelly advised Members that the design of the Implementation Report had been finalised and he provided Members with a virtual tour of it. He said that as it is now complete, it will be necessary to furnish it to NOAC and to the CEs of our constituent Local Authorities. He advised that he would also circulate a link to Members so that they can access it on the NWRA website.

Cllr. Declan McDonnell stated that the economic performance of this region is a growing concern, referencing the fact that the European Commission has recognised the Northern and Western Region's economy as a "Transition Region". He advised that this region's GDP was getting worse not better, and this is a big problem for the region. Cllr. McDonnell stated that a huge case needed to be made to the government to deal with this worsening trend urgently.

Mr. David Minton stated that the figures given by the EU is being used by government to show how the country is doing well however when it is highlighted that GDP figures show the Region being in transition, they dismiss GDP as a suitable metric. Mr Minton stated that this measure should either be used as a measure or not used for any analysis.

Proposed: Cllr. Declan McDonnell

Seconded: Cllr. Orla Leyden

Unanimously agreed that:

'Members write to the Minister highlighting the worrying trend in the economic performance of the region and request a meeting with the Minister.'

Mr Kelly advised Members that the NFP was up for review next year and that a new Planning and Development Bill was to be published within the coming weeks. He said that the Bill may introduce new responsibilities for Assemblies and timelines – including timelines for Development Plans.

Cllr. Donal Gilroy asked for a summary of the status of each County Development Plan to be circulated to Members and Mr Kelly confirmed that this would be circulated.

b) Marine Spatial Planning Study

Mr Denis Kelly outlined the background of the Marine Spatial Planning Study. He referenced the provisions of the Marine Planning Act 2021 that was bringing fundamental change to Ireland's Marine governance and planning system. He highlighted that demands for marine space is increasing and so are the economic opportunities.

Mr Kelly advised that the legislation had provided for Designated Maritime Area Plans (DMAPS) but no decision had been made by government on who or how they would be rolled out. Within this context the Assembly had commissioned Dr Cormac Walsh to prepare a position paper that would look at the implications for coastal local authorities and assemblies, review examples of best practice in regional governance and provide a scoping assessment of socio-economic opportunities. He said that a Strategy Paper would be very useful to bring a regional voice to the table. He advised that coastal local authorities had been approached to participate in this work and that it is hoped the report would be complete this before Easter.

Mr David Minton stated he would circulate a link to a summary on the website, explaining a brief introduction to the study.

c) Submission to Proposed N61 Improvement Tulsk to Clashaganny (Part 8 Application) (Circulated)

Mr Denis Kelly advised that the report had been circulated, advised he would take questions on it and asked members to note it.

Proposed: Cllr. Donal Lyons

Seconded: Cllr. Orla Leyden

Resolved that:

‘Members note the submission made to the N61 Improvement Tulsk to Clashaganny (Part 8 Application) as circulated’

d) Submission to Draft Forestry Strategies (for noting – submission made following consideration at the November assembly Meeting) (Circulated)

Mr Denis Kelly advised that the report included the points made at the last meeting. He asked that the submission be noted.

Cllr. Justin Warnock thanked Mr Kelly and his team for the great submission and encouraged all to keep the momentum going in relation to the fair distribution of forestry plantations.

6) Conferences/Training event update

a) Association of Irish Regions Conference – Bookings Open – www.irishregions.ie

Mr David Minton reminded members about the flagship AIR event a collaboration between the three Assemblies being held in Monaghan on the 7-9th of February. He encouraged all members to attend the event and Mr Minton also told members that accommodation was limited so booking early was advised.

Cllr. Declan McDonnell noted the importance of the Conference for the Region, and he encouraged Members to promote the Conference within their own Councils. He emphasised its importance for the region’s development adding that there could be numerous high-profile attendees including possibly Minister Michael McGrath.

Cllr. Niall McNelis suggested there should be a crafted message that we can all share during this event, so we are all be pushing the same message.

Cllr. David Maxwell stated he had no issue with the idea to meet the Minister to raise relevant issues however he added that this is an event that has been organised by the three Regional Assemblies and could prove problematic.

Many Members agreed with Cllr. McKenna however some Members questioned whether this was the best avenue for the meeting with the Minister. It was suggested that more time and a dedicated meeting could be better to give the items raised enough time to be adequately discussed.

Members agreed that Mr Minton should try and secure a meeting with the Minister or an Oireachtas briefing in advance of this conference. This meeting will be to discuss the issues raised by Members. If a meeting was not secured there could be further discussions at the January meeting. It was stated that the meeting was of such importance that it was vital to give it the time and attention it deserved.

Proposed: Cllr. Brian McKenna

Seconded: Cllr. Donal Gilroy

And Unanimously Agreed that:

‘Members agree to the organising of a meeting of at least a half an hour with Minister Micheal McGrath to discuss the many issues relating to funding in the Region. It was stated that if a meeting could not be secured before this date, then a meeting would be proposed on the date of the AIR Conference in Monaghan in February.’

b) 'Launch of ERDF Programme – Galway – January 25th, 2023.

Mr David Minton informed Members of the event that is planned to launch the ERDF Programme, in the Porterhouse in Galway on the 25th of January 2023. He encouraged all Members to attend. He stated that the formal notification for this would be sent out at a later stage.

7) **Motion Proposed by Cllr. Donal Gilroy:**

Proposed: Cllr. Donal Gilroy

Seconded: Cllr. Justin Warnock

Unanimously Agreed that:

"The Northern and Western Regional Assembly calls on the Minister for Transport to review the decision to exclude the N15 from Sligo to Bundoran (part of the Atlantic Economic Corridor) and to include this section of road as a Major Project under TII criteria and that it be listed in the National Development Plan (NDP) and to acknowledge that the development of this section of infrastructure is vital to the development of Sligo as a Regional Growth Centre and the development of the entire Border and Northwest Region"

8) **'Correspondence**

Draft Schedule of Meetings for 2023(Circulated)

Mr Gerry Doyle asked Members to note the schedule of meetings for 2023.

9) **Any other Business**

Proposed: Cllr. Joe Sheridan

Seconded: Cllr. Orla Leyden

Unanimously Agreed that:

'The NWRA call on the Government & specifically Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform for the inclusion of Kerosene and bulk gas in the TBESS scheme as it biases against our region's small business owners as they are excluded from the scheme.'

Cllr. Christy Hyland suggested that in the new year there could be a special discussion on the Western Rail Corridor. He stated he was disappointed with what happened with the TenT funding, and he emphasized the importance of the Rail Corridor into the future.

Cathaoirleach David Collins wished all Members and Assembly staff a Happy Christmas, he thanked everyone for their work during the past year and stated he was looking forward to continuing the great work in 2023.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed: _____ (Cathaoirleach) Date: _____