

**Minutes of the Northern & Western Regional Assembly Meeting
held on 24th March 2023 at 11am in Roscommon Chamber.**

Present:

Cllr. David Maxwell	Cllr. John Naughten	Cllr. Declan McDonnell
Cllr. Joe Sheridan	Cllr. Declan Bree	Cllr. Donal Lyons
Cllr. Orla Leyden	Cllr. Clifford Kelly	Cllr. Jack Murray
Cllr. Donal Gilroy	Cllr. Enda Stenson	Cllr. Niall McNelis
Cllr. Enda McGloin	Cllr. Patrick McGowan	

Presided: Cllr. David Collins (Cathaoirleach)

Apologies: Cllr. Christy Hyland, Cllr. Jimmy McClearn, Cllr. John Caulfield, Cllr. Michael Crowe, Cllr. Frank McBrearty, Cllr. Brian McKenna, Cllr. Jarlath Munnely, Cllr. Tim Broderick, Cllr. Justin Warnock, Mr. Gerry Doyle (Assistant Director)

Officials: Northern & Western Regional Assembly:

Mr. David Minton (Director)
Mr. Denis Kelly (Senior Planner / Assistant Director)
Mr. Frank Flanagan (Senior Executive Planner)
Ms. Catriona Meehan (Clerical Officer)
Ms. Eimear Finnegan (Clerical Officer)

1) Adoption of the Minutes of the Meeting of the Northern & Western Regional Assembly held on the 17th February 2023 (Circulated):

Proposed by: Cllr. Declan McDonnell

Seconded by: Cllr. Orla Leyden

And unanimously Resolved that:

'That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Northern & Western Regional Assembly held on 17th February 2023 be adopted'.

2) Director's Update

Mr. David Minton communicated the following updates -

- The €5.4m European Digital Innovation Hub was recently launched to help small businesses and public agencies in the Northern and Western Region. The NWRA will be writing to the Chief Executives of the nine Local Authorities. Grants will be available from €70k - €2.5m for public agencies including ETB's and public sector bodies, giving them a huge opportunity to receive funding to work towards digital transformation.
- Galway City and County Council's has been chosen to participate in the pilot programme "NetZeroCities" which will work towards the reduction of carbon across two years. €1.2m has been successfully secured. He advised that this was a good example of a strong partnerships with a Local Authority.
- The NWRA Newsletter will be distributed this week and he asked all Councillors to please circulate it.
- "Europe Day" is an upcoming event in May in which adverts and editorials highlighting the ongoing work of the Assembly will be published in local newspapers.

Members Comments

Cllr. Declan McDonnell advised of an upcoming IEU funding event being held on 19th April in the Radisson in Athlone. He urged members to attend the event.

Mr. David Minton advised all Members that if they are available to please attend the event.

Cllr. Niall McNelis requested that a presentation on all the good news that is happening should be created and Members would be able share this on their social media platforms.

Cllr. Patrick McGowan advised of the AILG Annual Conference was also taking place in Kilkenny on the 19th and 20th April.

3) Presentation on Just Transition Fund (Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly)

Mr. Terry Connolly of the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly gave a presentation on the Just Transition Fund (JTF) (presentation attached as Appendix 1). Mr. Connolly advised that the JTF shall contribute to the single specific objective of enabling regions and people to address the social, employment, economic and environmental impacts of the transition towards the Union's 2030 targets for energy and climate and a climate-neutral economy of the Union by 2050, based on the Paris Agreement. He outlined the three priorities of the JTF – 1) to generate employment by diversifying the local economy, 2) Restoration of assets, 3) Smart and sustainable mobility options. Funding will be applied based on the map in Mr. Connolly's presentation (Appendix 1). He stated the JTF are currently engaging with stakeholders in the region. Mr. Connolly advised the €169m budget must be spent before the end of 2026.

Members Questions

Cllr. Leyden queried "match funding" requirements, asked how community and youth groups could be encouraged to apply and how JTF would link to other EU funding streams. She further queried how JTF would support the circular economy and if Failte Ireland had already assigned projects to be funded under JTF.

Cllr. McGowan queried were the peat areas to be funded for rehabilitation already decided upon.

The Cathaoirleach thanked Mr. Connolly for his presentation and queried how the funding will be made available Mr. Connolly advised that the funding agencies such as Pobal, Failte Ireland etc are gearing up with a number of calls being launched in the coming months. Mr. Connolly stated that the EU distribute funding by designated territorial area. He advised that any organisation outside of the area can apply for funding, but they must clearly demonstrate how the funding would benefit the region within the outlined area of the JTF. He stated that if multiple funding pots are secured, there must be clear boundaries as to how it is being used, for example, one fund might be used for feasibility and another fund for a fit out. He advised to split up tasks and each fund will be required to complement the other. Mr. Connolly stated they are encouraging circular economy applicants to apply for JTF.

Mr. David Minton acknowledged Mr. Connolly for his presentation and information provided at the meeting.

4) Planning and Economic Development

a) Submission to 'Proposed Extension of Duration of Sligo County Development Plan 2017 – 2023' – circulated report for noting

Mr. Denis Kelly outlined Sligo County Councils proposal to extend the Sligo County Development Plan 2017 – 2023, up to the end of July 2024. He communicated that the plan was initially adopted in July 2017 and a variation had been made to it, aligning it with the NPF and RSES. He advised that the Council had initiated a pre-draft consultation from July to September 2021. However, the Covid-19 pandemic caused disruption to their timeline and in turn has caused delays in the preparation of the new Draft Sligo CDP, subsequently they are now proposing an extension to the life of the current CDP until July 2024.

Members Comments

Cllr. Gilroy requested that in future, councillors from the area should be consulted as he has an issue with the deferral to May 2024 as its completion will conflict with the next council election. He acknowledged there had been staffing issue. He suggested the submission should be circulated to Councillors especially those in the relevant county.

Cllr. Orla Leyden stated that they were having the same issue with delays. She highlighted the issue of figures being used becoming more out of date as delays continue. Cllr Leyden highlighted the lack of action after plans are adopted as a major issue.

Cllr. John Naughten stated that the issue of low traffic volumes had impacted county plans also. He enquired whether Local Area Plan could actually expire.

Mr Denis Kelly advised that the draft plan or variation comes in front of the Members of the Council before it is published, so Members from that planning authority will have had a say in its publication and will be aware of it in advance of the Assembly. Nonetheless, he advised that arrangements will be put in place to notify all members of any such development plan consultations by email. He acknowledged the issues with staffing within the councils is a significant issue. He advised that a local area plan shall state the period of the plan and their local plan team will be able to advise them on it as they have a certain lifespan and are not kept alive indefinitely.

Proposed: Cllr. Donal Gilroy

Seconded: Cllr. Donal Lyons and

Unanimously Resolved that:

'Members note and agree the submission to Proposed Extension of Duration of Sligo County Development Plan 2017-2023'

b) Submission to 'Tuam Draft Local Area Plan 2023-2029'

Mr. Denis Kelly advised that this LAP consultation closed on Thursday 23rd March and the report has been circulated.

Mr. Frank Flanagan gave a presentation on the Tuam LAP 2023-2029. He advised this was the first time a Local Transport Plan for Tuam is part of its Local Area Plan. He communicated that the objectives of the plan were easy to follow. He outlined the main concerns being population growth. He stated the disused railway has been examined as part of the plan. Mr Flanagan praised the fact that all land had been zoned for development but added that it could go further.

Members Comments

Cllr. McDonnell stated that in various regions, people have R1 lands that they don't build on but yet there is R2 land available that they want to build on.

Cllr. Sheridan thanked Mr. Flanagan for his presentation and for being present at the Draft LAP Drop-in session in Tuam. He advised that he feels there is an issue in Tuam with the over subscription of R1 lands. He stated there is positives in relation to vacancy rates in Tuam, however there are 3 units vacant for 8 years.

Mr. Flanagan replied that carbon reduction, compact development and climate change have all been addressed in the plans. He advised that in relation to the quanton of lands zoned R1 and R2, it will be an issue for the planning authority to consider.

Proposed: Cllr. Joe Sheridan

Seconded: Cllr. Declan McDonnell

Unanimously Resolved that:

'Members note and agree the submission to Tuam Draft Local Area Plan 2023-2029'

c) Submission to 'Draft Castlebar Local Area Plan 2023-2029'

Mr. Denis Kelly advised that a draft interim report had been circulated and asked Frank Flanagan to update Members on it. Mr Flanagan in updating Members advised that an outstanding matter to be examined is the issue of flooding. He advised that the executive will revert to the Cathaoirleach with finalised document for review

Proposed: Cllr. Declan McDonnell

Seconded: Cllr. Donal Gilroy

Unanimously Resolved that:

'Members note and agree the submission to Draft Castlebar Local Area Plan 2023-2029, subject to the issue of flood risk being considered and agreed with the Cathaoirleach'.

d) Submission re: Pre-Draft Planning and Development Bill (for noting)

Mr. Denis Kelly outlining the background to the submission and the contents of same, which had been circulated with the agenda.

Proposed: Cllr. John Naughton

Seconded: Cllr. Joe Sheridan

Unanimously Resolved that:

'Members note and agree the submission to Pre-Draft Planning and Development Bill'.

5) Correspondence

Mr. David Minton advised of the invitation received from Galway County Council to give a presentation to all members in relation to EU funding and potential funding.

Proposed: Cathaoirleach Cllr David Collins

Seconded: Cllr. Declan McDonnell and

Unanimously resolved that:

'The Assembly should write and confirm a presentation will be given to Galway County Council on EU funding and potential funding'.

Cllr. Donal Gilroy proposed a Motion that every 5 years a presentation should be given to County Councils on EU funding.

Mr. David Minton stated a bespoke EU funding presentation would be shared with Local Authorities adding that Local Authorities always had an open invitation to engage with the Regional Assembly on funding matters.

Proposed: Cllr. Donal Gilroy

Seconded: Cllr. John Naughton and

Unanimously resolved that:

'The Assembly will give a presentation to each Local Authority on EU funding every 5 years.'

6) Any other Business

Cllr. McGowan advised that there used to be a Chief Executive present at Assembly meetings. The Cathaoirleach Cllr. David Collins stated that Mr. Brendan McGrath is the designated Chief Executive and he was present at the February meeting but sent his apologies that he was unable to attend today.

Members enquired about the status of the Head Quarters of the Regional Assembly, members attendance and availability of hybrid meetings, and whether hybrid meetings can be accommodated in Roscommon Chamber.

David Minton proposed to hold a meeting with the Assembly Corporate affairs sub-committee to discuss this and related matters shortly. This sub Committee he stated is made up of Cllr. Gilroy, Cllr. McDonnell, Cllr. McClearn, Cllr. Maxwell and the Cathaoirleach who also chairs the sub-committee.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed: _____ **(Cathaoirleach)** **Date:** _____