

**Minutes of the Northern & Western Regional Assembly Meeting
held on 21st April 2023 at 11am in Roscommon Chamber.**

Present:

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| Cllr. David Maxwell | Cllr. John Naughten | Cllr. Declan McDonnell |
| Cllr. Justin Warnock | Cllr. Declan Bree | Cllr. Donal Lyons |
| Cllr. Orla Leyden | Cllr. Clifford Kelly | Cllr. Jack Murray |
| Cllr. John Caulfield | Cllr. Enda Stenson | Cllr. Niall McNelis |
| Cllr. Tim Broderick | Cllr. Patrick McGowan | Cllr. Christy Hyland |
| Cllr. Jimmy McClearn | | |

Presided: Cllr. David Collins (Cathaoirleach)

Apologies: Cllr. Donal Gilroy, Cllr. Enda McGloin, Cllr. Michael Crowe, Cllr. Frank McBrearty, Cllr. Brian McKenna, Cllr. Jarlath Munnely, Cllr. Joe Sheridan, Mr. Denis Kelly (Senior Planner / Assistant Director)

Officials: Northern & Western Regional Assembly:

Mr. David Minton (Director)
Mr. Gerry Doyle (Assistant Director)
Mr. Frank Flanagan (Senior Executive Planner)
Mr. Conall McGettigan (Senior Executive Planner)
Mr. John Daly (Economist)
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 24th March 2023 (Circulated):

Proposed by: Cllr. Enda Stenson

Seconded by: Cllr. Declan McDonnell

And unanimously Resolved that:

'That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Northern & Western Regional Assembly held on 24th March 2023 be adopted'.

2) Any Matters Arising

No matters were raised by the Members.

3) Presentation and Q&A with Member of the European Parliament, Maria Walsh

Ms. Maria Walsh spoke to the Assembly about the wide range of work she is engaged in, including work in the areas of equality, employment, and education and the development of a blueprint for mental health services and promoting awareness of issues affecting the LGBTI community. She also advised of the possibility of the region gaining an additional seat in the upcoming European elections.

Members Questions

Mr. David Minton acknowledged Ms. Walsh MEP for giving the NWRA her time and attending the meeting. He reiterated the importance of focusing on areas that Ms. Walsh highlighted relating to issues affecting young people, diversity and that it was important that they remain on the Assembly agenda going forward.

Cllr. Niall McNellis advised that he is the Chairperson of the "Let's get talking" charity which provides mental health supports and therapy nationwide to those in need. He stated that Ms Walsh' great work in highlighting mental health issues should be acknowledged.

Cllr. Orla Leyden thanked Ms Walsh for her continued engagement with Councillors and the Assembly. She acknowledged Ms. Walsh's great work for all areas of society. Cllr. Leyden emphasised the importance of the investment opportunities now available to the region especially now that Ireland is the only English-speaking nation in the EU. She also highlighted the possible issues with AI relating to the loss of human connection.

Cllr. John Naughten stated that he wanted to emphasise the importance of talking about mental health. He stated that this region has many positives, but it needed investment to ensure the educated remain within the region going forward. He added there needed to be a rebalance between the regions and the cities.

Cllr. Jimmy McClearn highlighted the importance of the performance of the Northern and Western region versus other regions in the country. He stated that Europe needs to support this region and get it back to parity with the other regions.

Cllr. Declan McDonnell stated that funding used to be equal across regions, however, funding has declined in our region in recent years, and it needs to be brought back up in line with other regions. Cllr. McDonnell asked Ms. Walsh to endeavour to arrange a meeting with the Taoiseach for the Councillors of this region in relation to funding. He also highlighted the need for the outer city bypass in Galway to be urgently progressed.

Cllr. Donal Lyons reiterated the need for the outer city bypass in Galway. He also stated the need to make the Navy and Army more attractive opportunities for young people to pursue in order to enhance the overall defence forces of our country.

Cllr. Tim Broderick reiterated the need to address the staffing issues within the fire brigades, Gardai, Navy and Army. He also highlighted the need to promote apprenticeships to upcoming students.

Ms. Walsh confirmed she would do all she could to ensure that a meeting with the Taoiseach could be arranged.

The Cathaoirleach thanked Ms. Walsh for her continued hard work and for taking the time to speak with the Assembly.

4) Planning and Economic Development

a) "Regional Economic Briefing Notes: Regional Competitiveness Index" – Presentation by John Daly

Mr. John Daly presented on the "Regional Economic Briefing Notes: Regional Competitiveness Index" and advised this publication would be circulated with the members later. He highlighted a number of facts, including that 68.2% of employment in "ICT" companies assisted by enterprise agencies are in Dublin, in comparison to 5.7% in the West and 4.7% in the Mid-West. He also communicated that the Northern and Western Region is ranked 113th in the index, while the Eastern and Midland Region ranked 24th and Southern Region ranked 90th.

Members Comments

Cllr. Justin Warnock queried how many regions were included in the index when we placed 113th.

Cllr. Declan McDonnell questioned why the Southern Region is not that far away from us in terms of ranking. However, we were classified as a region in transition, and they were not.

Cllr. Tim Broderick questioned whether these figures were reflected in the RSES.

Mr. Daly stated that there were 237 regions included in the research. He stated that there were multiple factors included in the classification of a Region in Transition. He stated that our region had weak urban infrastructure and that possibly multinationals were distorting the figures for the Southern Region. Mr. Daly stated that the RSES stated our ambitions emphasizing again the importance of investment in infrastructure in the Region.

b) Updated Report on Submission to Mayo County Council on the Draft Castlebar Local Area Plan 2023-2029 (for noting)

Mr. Frank Flanagan communicated an update in relation to zoning and flooding within the Castlebar Local Area Plan.

Proposed: Cllr. Declan McDonnell

Seconded: Cllr. Christy Hyland

Unanimously Resolved that:

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

c) Report on Proposed Windfarm at Cloghercor, Co. Donegal. (SID Project)

Mr. Conall McGettigan advised that a report had been circulated to members. He advised that the proposal is not consistent with RSES and impacts on the Wild Atlantic Way, and potentially impacts upon the setting of Glenveagh National Park. Members were reminded that during the Donegal County Development Plan Variation on Wind Energy this Area (The Gweebarra Basin) was incorporated into those classified as Not open to consideration for Wind Energy Projects, and during the consultation phase of this Variation, the Assembly broadly agreed with the approach adopted by Donegal County Council, and the inclusion of a number of sensitive high amenity landscapes for protection.

Proposed: Cllr. Jack Murray

Seconded: Cllr. Justin Warnock

Unanimously Resolved that:

'Members note and agree the Report on Proposed Windfarm at Cloghercor, Co. Donegal (SID Project)'.

5) Any other Business

No further matters were raised by the Members.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed:  (Cathaoirleach)

Date: 19th May 2023