

**Minutes of the Northern & Western Regional Assembly Meeting
held on 19th May 2023 at 11am in Roscommon Chamber.**

Present:

Cllr. David Maxwell	Cllr. John Naughten	Cllr. Jimmy McClearn
Cllr. John Caulfield	Cllr. Declan Bree	Cllr. Donal Lyons
Cllr. Orla Leyden	Cllr. Clifford Kelly	Cllr. Jack Murray
Cllr. Donal Gilroy	Cllr. Justin Warnock	Cllr. Niall McNelis
Cllr. Patrick McGowan	Cllr. Declan McDonnell	Cllr. Jarlath Munnally
Cllr. Christy Hyland	Cllr. Joe Sheridan	Cllr. Áine Smith

Presided: Cllr. David Collins (Cathaoirleach)

Apologies:, Cllr. Enda Stenson, Cllr. Michael Crowe, Cllr. Frank McBrearty, Cllr. Tim Broderick, Cllr. Brian McKenna, Cllr. Enda McGloin

Officials: Northern & Western Regional Assembly:

Mr. Denis Kelly (A/Director)
Mr. Gerry Doyle (Assistant Director)
Mr. Frank Flanagan (A/Assistant Director / Senior Planner)
Mr. Brendan Mooney (A/Assistant Director)
Mr. Conall McGettigan (Senior Executive Planner)
Ms. Teresa Hooks (EU Programme Executive)
Ms. Fiona Timoney (A/ EU Projects Officer) Clerical Officer)
Ms. Catriona Meehan (Clerical Officer)
Mr. Patrick Devine (EU Programme Executive)
Ms Briega Shannon (Senior Staff Officer)

1) Cllr Aine Smith – Welcome

The Cathaoirleach David Collins welcomed Cllr Aine Smith to her first meeting as a new Member of the Assembly and wished her well in her new role. He noted that she was replacing her late father Cllr Sean Smith who he stated had been held in high regard by all who came into contact with him.

2) Adoption of the Minutes of the Meeting of the Northern & Western Regional Assembly held on 21st April 2023 (Circulated):

Proposed by: Cllr. Donal Lyons

Seconded by: Cllr. Niall McNelis

Unanimously resolved that:

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

3) Matters Arising

After some discussion it was agreed that each Member representing the Northern and Western Region in the European Parliament would be invited to a Special Meeting in either September or October.

Proposed: Cllr. David Maxwell

Seconded: Cllr. Jarlath Munnally

Unanimously agreed:

‘to invite MEP’s for the Region to address Members at a Special Meeting in September or October’

4) Director’s Update

Mr Denis Kelly welcomed Cllr. Áine Smith stating he was looking forward to working with her as he had done with her late father.

Mr Kelly discussed Mr David Minton's departure from the organisation and informed Members of the interim arrangements until his position is filled. He advised he would be acting in a temporary capacity and that consequential acting was approved by the department. He also confirmed a new post of Assistant Director had been approved. Mr Kelly stated that Mr Minton's departure would be a great loss to the organisation, and he wished him well in his new endeavour. It was noted that David would join the meeting later.

New Arrangements below:

Mr Denis Kelly	Director
Mr Gerry Doyle	Assistant Director – Corporate, Finance and External engagement
Mr Brendan Mooney	A/Assistant Director – Operational Programme/ERDF
Mr Frank Flanagan	A/Assistant Director – Planning and Economic Development

New staff structure approved.

Proposed: Cllr Donal Lyons

Seconded: Cllr David Maxwell.

Mr Kelly advised that the schedule of monthly meetings would be recirculated to Members for clarity, noting that they will remain on the third Friday of every month.

5) 2021/2027 ERDF Programme Update (Appendix 1)

Mr Brendan Mooney updated the members in relation to the Northern and Western Regional ERDF Programme 2021/2027, focusing on the 6 Schemes in Priority 1 "A Smarter and More Competitive Region", slides at Appendix 1.

6) Planning and Economic Development

Mr Frank Flanagan gave a brief update relating to ongoing work.

- Marine Planning position paper being prepared by Dr Cormac Walsh
- National Waste Management Plan submission being prepared in cooperation with other Assemblies.
- Pre-draft Monaghan Development Plan
- Bus Connects Galway

Members Questions:

- Cllr. McClearn noted that an issue causing anxiety at the moment was that in relation to zoned land tax. He questioned whether the Assembly will be issuing any memo to the local authorities on that or do the County Development plans now need to be reviewed? He questioned whether there is a role for the Regional Assembly?
- Cllr. Hyland questioned if land that's actively being farmed is exempt?
- Cllr. McGowan questioned what the situation was with reserved land. He questioned how the tax can be applicable in the case where you wouldn't actually get permission to build in the first place.
- Cllr. McDonnell stated that there is a new planning bill going through at the minute and questioned whether the Assembly should have made a submission?
- Cllr. Sheridan questioned if there is there a remit for the Assembly to comment on the size of turbines?
- Cllr. Lyons noted that he was seriously concerned about the bus service in Galway. He stated the Leisure land carpark has been earmarked as a terminus. There has been no consultation regarding this. What he is worried about are people on the east coast making decisions for people on the west coast, there has been no consultation.
- Cllr. Leydon questioned whether the Assembly has a role in getting an update on the connecting Ireland transport plan? If so, could the Assembly have a more active role in lobbying?

Mr. Frank Flanagan responded to the queries in turn.

- Frank Flanagan stated that the Regional Assemblies had a limited role in Zoned Land decisions and no role in determining residential zoned land tax issues. There has been some public discussion on agricultural land. Its inclusion is presently in scope, but this may change. He noted that it's not just zoning but serviceability informs the application of the tax as well. The RZLT will bring zoning decisions sharply into focus.
- In relation to Cllr. Leydon's queries, he noted that the Assembly is in discussions on local transport plans for all the key towns and that it would be possible to get an update. Mr Flanagan noted however that the transport plan for Roscommon town hasn't been discussed yet.
- In relation to Cllr. Sheridan's question regarding turbine heights, Section 28 Guidelines were published in 2019/2020 in draft form these have yet to be finalised. The 2006 guidelines remain in force.
- The Assembly had already made a submission to the Joint Oireachteas Committee on the proposed Planning Bill.

7) Any other Business

(a) **Lack of investment in Road Infrastructure**

Cllr. Donal Gilroy raised the issue of the recent visit of Minister Eamonn Ryan to a meeting of Sligo County Council. He noted that the upgrade of the N17 appears to have been pushed down the list of priorities, likewise the Western Railway Corridor. He stated that would appear to him in conflict with the objectives of the RSES.

Cllr. McNelis referred to the importance of Ireland West Airport Knock as a gateway into the region and asked should we ask them in to discuss? Cllr. McNelis also asked whether the Assembly could get a presentation on the offshore wind auction which took place recently?

Cllr. Maxwell mentioned the N2 and A5. He cited the time sensitivity of the funding for the N2 upgrade. He proposed that we should raise this as an issue to the relevant bodies. Cllr Patrick McGowan supported this. Cllr Maxwell noted that money had been spent on designing roads but now the brakes had been applied.

Members discussed the lack of investment in road transport in the Region stating that roads had fallen down in priority recently. It was also stated that the Minister had previously voiced support for the Western Rail Corridor which had also now slipped down the priority list. It was stated that proper infrastructure is needed between the big centres of population, Galway to Sligo and Sligo to Letterkenny. The futility of the Assembly writing to the Minister and the Minister's office simply acknowledging it was noted.

Motion

That the Minister for Transport, Eamonn Ryan be invited to meet with Assembly Members to address the items highlighted, it was stated that if this meeting was not secured further action might need to be taken.

Proposed Cllr. Patrick McGowan

Seconded Cllr. David Maxwell

Unanimously Agreed that:

'the Minister for Transport Eamonn Ryan be invited to meet with Members to discuss barriers to achieving regional competitiveness and in particular the legacy strategic infrastructure deficits in this region.'

(b) Off-shore Wind Auction

Cllr. Lyons requested a presentation regarding the offshore wind auction especially regarding those on the west coast. Cllr. McDonnell noted that we are a region in transition and that everything that we need to get done to bring us back up is being put down.

Cllr. Sheridan highlighted the opportunities which will arise for this region to bring forward funding for communities into the region, as a result of the offshore wind auction. He said that the Regional Assembly should be part of the decision and the geolocation and the opportunities will be put forward in the next 3-5 years.

Response from Mr Denis Kelly

Mr Denis Kelly said that these concerns had been highlighted before and it was disappointing that these matters remained unresolved. He advised that the assembly could seek a meeting with Minister Ryan and that further consideration should be given to how effective advocacy for the region could be best achieved. He advised that the opportunities and challenges of harnessing and managing our offshore potential is part of the marine spatial planning process and that it is intended that a paper on the preparation of Designated Maritime Area Plans (DMAPs) will be on the June Assembly Meeting agenda as alluded to earlier by Frank Flanagan.

(c) David Minton's departure from the Regional Assembly

The Cathaoirleach introduced Mr Minton to this part of the Assembly meeting. He began by highlighting the significant contribution that Mr Minton had made to the region because of his efforts and those of the staff he led during the last 7 years. He specifically mentioned Mr Minton's efforts regarding the RSES. He congratulated Mr Minton on his new role within Enterprise Ireland. The Cathaoirleach then opened the floor for members who paid their individual tributes to Mr Minton on his departure.

Mr Denis Kelly stated that Mr Minton had always been a positive, supportive leader of the Assembly, he highlighted his passion for Regional Development adding that his can do attitude raised the profile of the Assembly. Mr Kelly outlined a series of achievements and on behalf of all staff wished Mr Minton well on his new venture stating he had always been a great leader, boss and friend to all staff, adding that he would be a huge asset to any organisation.

Each Member in turn spoke about Mr Minton's contribution to the Assembly and how he worked with the Elected Members in a positive and collegiate manner. They stated that he will be a huge loss for the Assembly noting that Mr Minton was more than the Director of the Assembly he had become a friend who would always respond to queries from them. They highlighted the progress the Assembly had made since he became Director. Members all wished Mr Minton and his family well as he embarks on his new role.

In return David Minton thanked the Elected Members and staff for their assistance over the last seven years. He stated that he would have really fond memories of his time in the Assembly and that he would look to continue to contribute to the development of the region in his new role.

A presentation to Mr Minton followed.

The meeting closed.

Signed: _____ (Cathaoirleach) Date: __16th June 2023 _____