



Southern Regional Assembly

9th April 2021, 12:00pm via GoToMeeting

Draft Minutes

Presiding: Cllr. John Sheahan, Cathaoirleach

Present: Cllr. Deirdre O'Brien; Cllr. Robert Beasley; Cllr. Maura Bell; Cllr. Dan Boyle; Cllr. Michael Collins; Cllr. Pip Breen; Cllr. Joe Carroll; Cllr. Séamus Cosaí Fitzgerald; Cllr. Tom Cronin; Cllr. Frankie Daly; Cllr. Deirdre Forde; Cllr. P.J. Kelly; Cllr. Garret Kelleher; Cllr. Thomas Kinsella; Cllr. Kieran McCarthy; Cllr. Andrew McGuinness; Cllr. Ken Murnane; Cllr. Gerard Murphy; Cllr. Michael Murphy; Cllr. Sheila O'Callaghan; Cllr. Conor McGuinness; Cllr. Michael O'Meara; Cllr. Michael O'Shea; Cllr. Thomas Phelan; Cllr. Gillian Coughlan.

Apologies: None

Officials Present: David Kelly; Kevin Lynch; Derville Brennan; Robert Fennelly; Sarah Davoren; Enda Hogan; Siobhán Rudden; Samantha Richardson; Rose Power; Karen Coughlan; Marie Harnett; Yvonne Cooney; Maria Murphy; Alice Byrne Kelly; Anna Higgins.

Speakers: Teresa Lennon, Irish Regions European Office, Tomás Campbell, Claire Finn, Cillian Moran, Ray O'Leary, Garret Doocey, Department of Transport; Karen Coughlan, Southern Regional Assembly.

A record of attendance was taken by means of roll call.

1. Adoption of Minutes of Meeting held on 12th March

The Members adopted the minutes of the meeting held on 12th March 2021, proposed by Cllr. Beasley and seconded by Cllr. O'Shea.

2. Matters Arising

David Kelly confirmed that a list of RSES Regional Policy Objectives (RPO) will be circulated to all Members in due course.

Cllr. Coughlan referred to impact of Brexit on the fishing sector raised at the last meeting. David Kelly advised while the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine had been contacted and a response awaited, it is not a function of the SRA.

3. Presentation by Teresa Lennon of the Irish Regions European Office (IREO)

Teresa Lennon presented an update of the work of the Committee of the Regions (CoR), including the involvement of the CoR Members that sit on the Assembly.

The Cathaoirleach and the Members thanked Teresa for her presentation and asked Members to subscribe to the IREO newsletter. The CoR Assembly Members acknowledged the support and work of the IREO. Points arising included:

- A need for involvement of local and regional authorities in the implementation of EU funds, including the Recovery and Resilience Fund.;

- CoR best practice documents should be issued to policy officers in the local authorities and the need for European policy officers in all local authorities;
- A need for additional work to keep CoR and Assembly Members informed.
- Acknowledgement of the work of Cllr. M Murphy as Head of the Irish Delegation

David Kelly confirmed that Assembly meetings will include regular updates from the IREO going forward.

4. COHES3ION project update

Karen Coughlan, EU Projects Officer, presented the Interreg Europe supported COHES3ION project. The main focus of COHES3ION is to improve the governance of Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3) through the integration of a regional element into S3 to improve the impact of ERDF ROP's. The main outputs of the project are:

- To provide methodological tools to make a Smart Territorial Map of specialization capabilities of business, industry and research at territory level (region, county, metropolis, city levels), aligned with target regional S3;
- To identify, exchange and disseminate regional good practices;
- To carry out a regional strategic thinking process with all relevant stakeholders, leading to the adoption of Regional Action Plans focusing on S3 multi-level governance models;
- To implement and evaluate the impact of Regional Action Plans leading to improved governance, new projects and updated S3 considering all territory levels;
- To deliver policy recommendations for the mainstreaming of the territorial dimension into S3 and ERDF OPs.

Two pieces of work are being funded through Cohes3ion to advance the implementation of the Southern RSES:

1. Development of a framework/toolkit to support a regional approach for S3 in the Southern Region. Bable, a German-based consultancy firm have been procured to work on this with the SRA with work due to be finalised and presented in mid-May;
2. Smart Region definition and framework to facilitate Smart Cities Driving a Smart Region. Maynooth University has been procured to work with the SRA with work due to be finalised in mid-May.

David Kelly highlighted the contribution of this work to inform and progress the implementation of the RSES and the upcoming ERDF Regional Operational Programme. He advised that SRA is scheduled to meet with Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment on 9th April to discuss how this work can align and inform the drafting of the national S3.

Cllr. Forde (a member of the Interregional Group on Health and Wellbeing across Europe) stressed the importance of incorporating the roll out of better health outcomes in the Smart Region and S3 approach.

Cllr. Breen raised concern that rural Ireland was not represented.

Cllr. McCarthy noted that the S3 work package methodologies can be used for SMART specialisation portfolio.

Karen Coughlan advised that

- The Smart Region and S3 frameworks very much focus on the citizen and will indirectly touch on sectors impacting on health and wellbeing particularly in the use of technological advances;
- The project represents the region including rural Ireland. In terms of the S3 approach the stakeholder consultation and subsequent Entrepreneurial Discovery Process will have direct contact with the SME's. The Smart Region approach will acknowledge and address the issues currently facing rural Ireland;
- The frameworks being developed will provide a methodology and valuable tool that can be replicated in other regions and approach to strategy formulation.

5. National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (NIFTI) – Department of Transport

David Kelly introduced representatives from the Department of Transport, Ray O'Leary, Claire Finn and Tomás Campbell. He noted the importance of NIFTI in delivering the objectives of the National Planning Framework and its significance for the Southern Region regarding connectivity.

Ray O'Leary introduced the background to NIFTI in the context of Project Ireland 2040.

Claire Finn noted that NIFTI was launched on 31st March and is currently undergoing a public consultation until 31st May 2021. She encouraged Members to visit the government consultation website to download and comment on the report.

Tomás Campbell presented key aspects of NIFTI:

- It is a long-term framework for transport investment that supports the delivery of Project Ireland 2040 and replaces the Strategic Investment Framework for Land Transport (SIFLT);
- It contains ten key challenges and constraints, along with investment priorities and hierarchies;
- Future transport projects will have to demonstrate their alignment with NIFTI,
- New structures will be put in place in an updated Common Appraisal Framework, a decision-making framework to inform future investment in land transport and to ensure a consistent national approach;
- NIFTI is at Phase 3 and is out to public consultancy from 31st March to 31st May 2021. The next step of the process will review the outcome of the public consultation, for publication later this year.

The Cathaoirleach and Members thanked the NIFTI team for their presentation. A discussion followed with the main points raised:

- The outcome of the public consultation should produce a set of principles to help to measure future infrastructure projects;
- Infrastructure must be for urban centres outside Dublin and to be multimodal and not promote single infrastructure proposals;
- The need to reconsider connectivity to Rosslare Europort from Limerick, Tipperary and other regions for the supply of goods between Ireland and mainland Europe;
- The presentation should be circulated to the strategic policy committees of the various local authorities
- The need to balance port connectivity to decrease dependency on Dublin and the eastern seaboard, especially for tourism and freight;
- If connectivity in relation to accessing the 400 office hubs for remote working for people in rural areas is part of the project.

Responses included:

- They would welcome submissions from the local authorities on NIFTI;
- The Department of Transport recognises the importance of regional re-balance and transport-led development;
- Noted Rosslare, Ringaskiddy and airports supports and emphasised NIFTI is the owner of the land transport network and it is important to have good surface access to the ports and airports network. The Department has commitments to be delivered by 2030, which sets parameters for transport investment.

David Kelly thanked Department for their presentation and noted that the SRA will make a detailed submission on NIFTI, which will be discussed at the next Assembly meeting. The RSES for the Southern Region will be the basis of the submission. Cllr. Sheahan requested for the involvement of the SPAs in the drafting of the submission.

6. Any Other Business

David Kelly noted the letter from the First Minister of Wales to Members and the ongoing commitment of the Welsh Government and its commitment to the Ireland Wales collaboration.

Cllr. McCarthy suggested a biannual meeting with the Welsh government regarding Ireland Wales Programme.

7. Date of Next Meeting

Friday, 14th May 2021

Signed: _____

John Sheahan
Cllr. John Sheahan
Cathaoirleach

Date: 17.05.2021

AGENDA

9th April 2021

1. Adoption of Minutes of Meeting held on 12th March 2021
2. Matters Arising
3. National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (NIFTI) – Dept. of Transport
4. IREO – CoR update
5. COHES3ION project update
6. Any Other Business
7. Date of Next Meeting

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