



SOUTHERN & EASTERN  
Regional Assembly  
Promoting Our Region



Ireland's EU Structural Funds  
Programmes 2007 - 2013  
Co-funded by the Irish Government  
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## Ireland Wales Programme 2007 – 2013

### Programme Monitoring Committee (10) Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> May 2012

The meeting was held at Welsh Government Offices, Llandudno Junction, Wales.

Attendance is as shown at Annex 1 while apologies were received from Cllr. Senan Griffin, Cllr. Paddy Kavanagh, Tom Doyle, Peter Bunting, Alma Murnane, Carys Thomas, Tracey Burke, Steve Lloyd and Martyn Jeffries.

#### Agenda Item 1: Opening and Introduction

1. Rob Halford, Joint Chair, opened the meeting. He welcomed those in attendance, including Maria Jose Doval Tedin from the European Commission and Jane Macmillan from the Welsh European Funding Office. He also welcomed Cllr. Jim Holloway who was attending in place of Cllr. Senan Griffin.

#### Agenda Item 2: Minutes of PMC 9 held at the Guinness Storehouse, Dublin on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2011

2. The minutes of PMC 9 had been circulated in advance of the meeting and were agreed as a true record.

#### Agenda Item 3: Matters Arising

3. Simon Baily reported on the action points from the previous meeting:

**Action 1: Traffic light report to be reviewed to explore inclusion of five aspects.**

All aspects of this have been achieved, with the exception of linking project expenditure to outputs. Simon said that he will liaise with the RME team for guidance to see if there was an appropriate or effective way of achieving this.

**Action 2: MA to consider potential for over-commitment of grant funding for the 5th bidding round projects before the meeting on 24 November.**

The Managing Authority did explore the possibility of a small level of over commitment for the 5<sup>th</sup> Bidding Round. However, this was not necessary in the end as a small balance of roughly €100,000 remained to be allocated following the Steering Committee meeting.

**Action 3: The JTS to report back to the PMC with a qualitative perspective as to what the programme was achieving and the ingredients of success.**

The JTS is currently working on how best to tell the story of project activity and project successes which is reflected in the papers that were circulated to the members in advance of

the meeting and that work would continue on this in order to make it the best possible presentation of activity on the ground.

**Action 4: Narrative surrounding progress against indicators to be provided in future Progress against indicators reports.**

Simon advised that the JTS had undertaken a full review of indicators on all projects and that the quality of the data was greatly improved. Narrative was also included with the report and this would be further improved for future meetings.

**Action 5: JTS to convene an emergency meeting with project partners from the WIT project. PMC members to be notified of the outcome and to be updated on a regular basis regarding the progress of the strategic projects.**

Representatives from the MA and WEFO met with the project partners on three occasions since the last PMC meeting. Simon reported a strong personality clash which has caused a difficulty with project progress. The meetings have proven helpful and will continue while most of the difficulties have been resolved.

**Action 6: Smaller items in the MTE implementation follow up to be addressed in early 2012**

There were 3 issues outstanding regarding the MTE follow up. Firstly, in relation to the development of further indicators for Cross Cutting Themes, WEFO experts advised that this would be best left for the development of a successor programme. In relation to improved reporting of outputs and results this had been largely implemented. In relation to the development of wider socio economic context indicators there had been a significant challenge in obtaining timely and meaningful indicators.

**Agenda Item 5: Approval of Annual Implementation (AIR) Report 2011**

4. Simon Baily presented the highlights from the AIR 2011, including 99% commitment of Programme funds, three PMC meetings, N+2 targets met and the successful annual event.
5. Gwyn Evans said that he will make some written comments on the report after the meeting.
6. Maria Jose Doval Tedin said that in general the report was good. She had two observations; firstly, that the report should include a small reference to financial instruments as Regulation 1083 has been modified, and secondly, the report should reflect the added value of the activities – the results and benefits. Further comments will be made in writing.
7. Rob asked the Committee to approve the report. Written comments were requested by 15<sup>th</sup> June with the JTS to submit the report to the European Commission before June 30<sup>th</sup>.

**ACTION: Written comments to be submitted to the JTS by 15<sup>th</sup> June with the report to be submitted to the European Commission by June 30<sup>th</sup>.**

**Agenda Item 6: Programme Update Report including N+2 update**

**Programme Commitment**

8. Simon gave an overview of the Programme's progress since the last meeting. A further eight projects were approved since the last meeting bringing Programme commitment to 99% of allocation within Priorities 1 and 2. While a balance of €0.6million is outstanding, The JTS closed a call for proposals on 15<sup>th</sup> May to extend existing projects. Seven applications were submitted and are currently under consideration.

### **N+2 Update**

9. Simon presented updated N+2 figures for the first half of 2012 since the PMC papers were released. Updates to Table 2 show that as of 30<sup>th</sup> May the amount of claims paid had increased from €1.4m to €2.3m, adjusting the shortfall from €6.5m to €5.6m. Simon said that the number of files being processed by First Level Control will ensure that the N+2 target should be met in good time this year.
10. Simon reported on the Traffic Light Annex, showing the percentage-spend for each project. Overall, project spend is 79% of profile and the Programme's aim is to raise this to over 90%. Action will be taken to ensure that spend increases through the Aftercare service and First Level Control.
11. Gwyn suggested a change to simplify the colour coding by reducing the number of colours.
12. Mike Pollard asked if there was a plan to take account of the possibility of additional underspends returning to the programme. Simon outlined some options, including the possibility of further extensions and/ or facilitating a number of preparatory projects, similar to those run by the Northern Periphery Programme. It would allow organisations to prepare ideas and partnerships which would be ready for the new Programming period.
13. Colette Price asked if the decision on any surplus funds will be taken by the PMC. Simon advised that any decision on fund allocation will be taken by the PMC.
14. Jane Macmillan asked if any forecasted underspend would have an impact on overall N+2 figures. Simon stated that it would not be an issue for the 2012 targets. Maria advised the MA to submit a payment claim before November to avoid delays. Simon advised that the CA would submit claims on a regular basis throughout the year.
15. Cllr. Tom Richards congratulated the JTS on the work to reach the N+2 target. He queried the delays in making payments to project partners. He referred specifically to the ISMLKN project, where a second North Wales partner has withdrawn due to cash flow difficulties. He noted that he was a board member of the project's Lead Partner, PBI. Simon shared the concern and acknowledged that there had been some delays on the part of the MA in relation to this. The principal reason for the delay was down to staff shortages and the difficulty in securing clearance to hire replacements. He thanked the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform for their efforts in assisting with this issue. However he also advised that the MA had received assurances from the now departed partner that they had the capacity to deliver the project and that further difficulties would not arise. As such, the project partner also had to bear a degree of responsibility in the matter. He also advised that he been in regular dialogue with the Lead Partner on the matter in order to keep them briefed on developments.

### **European Commission Audit**

16. Simon reported that the MA received a draft audit letter from the European Commission in October 2011 following an audit of First Level Control systems. The letter made a small number of recommendations to which the MA responded. No formal reply has yet been received by the MA and Stephen Blair asked when DG Regio will respond to the letter. Maria will follow up on his query.

### **Strategic Project Update**

17. Simon updated the Committee on Winning in Tendering. Programme representatives have held three meetings with the project partners and progress has been made. Interpersonal difficulties underlie the problems, but Simon reported that the situation appears to be improving. Rob said that the first meeting was difficult and tense, but they are working better. He felt that the Programme needs to keep the pressure on the partners and discussions are ongoing. A further meeting is provisionally planned for September.
18. The partnership is strong in Smart Coasts=Sustainable Communities. However, Simon noted that the partners needed some pressure to get started in earnest. The project is now progressing quite well while spend and activity levels have increased accordingly.
19. Both projects will continue to be monitored closely and will also be invited to present their findings to the PMC at a later date.

### **Programme Indicators**

20. Simon outlined the status of project outputs and results as they feed into the Programme's overall indicators.
21. Rob queries the difference between the predicted and achieved totals in the Priority 1 Theme 2 results figures. Simon stated that it was due to a timing issue, relating to when the projects report their progress to the JTS. Many projects had been slow to report their results but this was now changing.
22. Rob asked if all of the training undertaken through the projects would be certified. Gwyn noted that there are two groups undertaking training, those not working towards a certified qualification and those who are being trained but may fail. He estimated at approximately 88% would receive a certified qualification.
23. Roger noted the added value attached to training provided by projects, which was welcomed by Rob. However, he felt that there was a need to focus more on outcomes. Mike said that we need to tie the added value of the outputs into how we capture the project story.
24. Jane Macmillan asked if the projects actively move beneficiaries toward certified qualifications through the training.
25. Colette Price felt that the Programme needed to look at outcomes rather than outputs. Gwyn noted a European Commission paper which focuses on outputs without using the term "outcomes". Gwyn felt that it should be used. He noted that the Programme should have more result than output indicators.
26. Siobhán highlighted that Programme indicators are being addressed at progress report stage by the JTS and any figures in question are queried with the lead partners.
27. Rob felt that the Programme needs to drill down into the indicators. He asked when the numbers for Priority 1 Theme 2 will increase. Simon stated that this is partly dependent on the speed of reporting from projects but that he felt that this should be further improved by the time of the next meeting.

28. Rob suggested the possibility of including a variance analysis if that was feasible. This should tell whether the programme is over performing or whether there were grounds for concern. Jane also asked if a delivery profile for indicators for each project could be added to the report as this would also prove to be useful.

**ACTION: The JTS will address project underspend through Aftercare and First Level Control.**

**ACTION: The JTS will simplify the colour coding on the Traffic Light Index.**

**ACTION: Maria will follow up on the MA response to the European Commission's audit letter.**

**ACTION: The JTS is to further review how Programme indicators are reported to the PMC.**

#### **Agenda Item 7: Communications & Publicity**

29. Siobhán Rudden updated the Committee on communications activity since the last meeting. The Programme hosted four events, primarily information and networking opportunities for project partners. The highlight event was the Programme annual event, which took place in the Guinness Storehouse, Dublin last October.
30. Siobhán gave the Committee a brief overview of project activity, both recent highlights and upcoming events.
31. A report on the Programme's advances into social media was outlined, including progress with Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter. Siobhán informed the Committee on upcoming plans for activity on YouTube and Wikipedia.
32. Siobhán updated the Committee on Programme plans to participate in European Cooperation Day on 21<sup>st</sup> September by linking primary school children from Ireland and Wales. Projects will also be asked to come on board to publicise the initiative.
33. Mike acknowledged the work being done to date, particularly in the area of social media. He expressed concern about the timing of the annual event against the school timetable. Siobhán assured him that this was in hand and that there was still time to arrange the activity.
34. Mike also asked about progress with cluster development. Siobhán said that progress has stalled, but will resume before the end of the year.
35. Rob suggested that the JTS should assess how the Programme plans to use Twitter and other social media platforms. Siobhán explained that this has been considered, such as Facebook to monitor projects and Twitter to engage with media.

**ACTION: Plans for project clustering is to be finalised.**

#### **Agenda Item 8: Update on 2014-20 Programme Preparation**

36. Rob and Stephen gave an update on preparation for a new Programme. Rob noted that any work will be based on the draft Regulations.
37. Stephen confirmed that European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) will continue for the 2014-20 period and that there was a broad consensus of the value and importance of ETC. He noted

two elements to the discussions, the budget and the Regulations. Within the overall legislative framework, the Commission has drafted a separate regulation for ETC which is seen as a positive. However it will still be funded by the ERDF. It is also intended to allocate Programme resources through a global budget rather than via member states.

38. Stephen noted that the Commission has put a strong emphasis on performance frameworks and value for money. There is a possibility of liabilities for non-performance under the new Programme.
39. Stephen said that the Danish Presidency has made good progress on the Regulations. However, it is most likely that final decisions will be taken during the Irish Presidency in the first half of 2013.
40. Rob acknowledged the need for agreement at national level and negotiations should start in July. Preliminary discussions have started between the current MA and WEFO, mainly on preparatory work and learning from the past. These discussions have included how best to incorporate e-cohesion requirements, such as managing funds and online reporting.
41. Rob said that they aimed to have firmer plans by the next PMC meeting. He stressed that there was a lot to do, but that they were almost ready to involve Government Ministers.
42. Maria stressed that the main issue for the Commission was the concentration of funds and value for money. She suggested that the Programme takes the Atlantic Strategy into consideration during preparations, if relevant.

**ACTION: The Committee Chairs will brief the Members at the next meeting.**

#### **Agenda Item 9: Development Officer Report**

43. Roger presented an update of Aftercare activity from the Development team. He highlighted the progress of four projects.
44. As part of the report, Tony Maguire presented Project FUTSAL's progress to date, showing the cross-border activity and tangible outputs achieved to date. The presentation was welcomed by the Committee and they appreciated the successes to date.

#### **Agenda Item 10: Any Other Business**

45. The next meeting will be held in Dublin during November. Further details will follow.

## **SUMMARY OF ACTIONS**

## **ANNEX I**

**ACTION:** Written comments to be submitted to the JTS by 15<sup>th</sup> June with the report to be submitted to the European Commission by June 30<sup>th</sup>.

**ACTION:** The JTS will address project underspend through Aftercare and First Level Control.

**ACTION:** The JTS will simplify the colour coding on the Traffic Light Index.

**ACTION:** Maria will follow up on the MA response to the European Commission's audit letter.

**ACTION:** The JTS is to further review how Programme indicators are reported to the PMC.

**ACTION:** Plans for project clustering is to be finalised.

**ACTION:** The Committee Chairs will brief the Members at the next meeting.

**ATTENDANCE****ANNEX II**

## Joint Chairs

Rob Halford	Welsh Assembly Government
Stephen Blair	Southern and Eastern Regional Assembly

## Members

Cllr. Jim Holloway	Southern & Eastern Regional Assembly (Meath Co. Co.)
Cllr. Tomás Breathnach	Southern & Eastern Regional Assembly (Kilkenny Co. Co.)
Cllr. Tom Richards	Welsh Local Government Association (Pembrokeshire County Council)
Joanne Welford	Wales Council for Voluntary Action
Colette Price	Countryside Council for Wales

## Observers

Gwyn Evans	Welsh Local Government Association (Pembrokeshire County Council)
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## Advisors

Maria Jose Doval Tedin	The European Commission
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## Officials

Simon Baily	Joint Technical Secretariat
Siobhán Rudden	Joint Technical Secretariat
Diana Wilson	Welsh European Funding Office
Roger Seddon	Welsh European Funding Office
Mike Pollard	Welsh European Funding Office
Jane McMillan	Welsh European Funding Office
Fiona Hay	Joint Technical Secretariat/Welsh European Funding Office
Jo Pamment	Joint Technical Secretariat/ Welsh European Funding Office