

Minutes of the monthly meeting of the Mid West Regional Authority held at 1.30 P.M. on Tuesday 7th April 2009 in the Council Chamber, Limerick County Council, Dooradoyle, Limerick.

Cllr. B. Hanrahan, Cathaoirleach presided.

In attendance:

Clare Co. Co.

Cllrs. P. Considine, J. Crowe, B. Hanrahan, M. Kelly and P. McMahon.

Limerick City Co.

Cllr. M. Byrne, J. Cronin, G. Fahy, J. Houlihan, P. Kennedy, and L. Wallace.

Limerick Co. Co.

Cllrs. R. Brennan, E. Creighton, J. Houlihan, C. Hurley, E. Wade and L. Walsh.

North Tipperary Co. Co.

Cllrs. T. Berkery, W. Kennedy, J. Ryan, M. Ryan, J. Sheehy and M. Smith.

C.O.R: Cllr. C. Crowe.

Absent: Cllrs. L. Enright, M. Lafferty and M. Taylor-Quinn

Also Present.

Mr. L. Conneally, Director.

Mr. T. Mackey, Designated Manager

Mr. S. Treacy, Staff Officer

1. Minutes.

The minutes of the monthly meeting held on 3rd March 2009 were proposed by Cllr. M. Ryan, seconded by Cllr. P. Considine and agreed as presented.

2. Correspondence.

The Members noted the following correspondence copy of which had been circulated with the Agenda:

(A) Letter dated 4th March 2009 from Limerick Co. Co. regarding the following resolution which they had adopted: "That Limerick County Council calls on the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to keep Pallaskenry Agriculture

Agricultural College in County Limerick open". The following resolution was unanimously adopted:

"That the Mid West Regional Authority calls on the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to keep Pallaskenry Agriculture Agricultural College in County Limerick open".

(B) Letter dated 18th March 2009 from Birr Town Council re: Birr Town and Environs Draft Development.

(C) Letter dated 25th February 2009 from the South West Regional Authority regarding the Review of its Regional Planning Guidelines.

(D) Letter dated 27th February 2009 from the Midlands Regional Authority re: Notice to revise the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Midland Regional 2004-2016.

(E) Letter dated 25th February 2009 from North Tipperary County Council re: Review of County Development Plan 2004-2010 and preparation of County Development Plan 2010-2016.

(F) Letter dated 12th March 2009 from Longford County Council re: Longford County Development Plan 2009-2015.

(G) Letter dated 18th March 2009 from Listowel Town Council regarding proposal to make material amendments to the Draft Listowel Town Development Plan for the period 2009-2015.

(H) Letter dated 2nd March 2009 from Tralee Town Development Plan 2009-2015.

(I) Letter dated 9th March 2009 from Offaly County Council re: Notice of having adopted Offaly County Development Plan 2009-2015.

(J) Letter dated 13th March 2009 from Waterford County Council regarding review of its County Development Plan 2005-2011.

(K) Letter dated 13th March 2009 from Clare County Council re; Planning and Development Acts 2000-2006: Draft West Clare Local Area Plan 2009-2015.

(L) Letter dated 2nd March 2009 from Clare County Council re: Review of the existing 2005 Clare County Development Plan and preparation of a new Clare County Development Plan 2011-2017.

(M) Letter dated 19th March 2009 from Waterford City Council re: Proposed Variation to Waterford City Development Plan.

The Members also noted the following correspondence:

(A) Letter dated 25th March 2009 from Clare County Council re; Planning and Development Acts 2000-2006; South Clare Local Area Plan 2009-2015.

(B) Letter dated 30th March 2009 from the Department of the Environment Heritage and Local Government ref: WQ 03/09 European Communities (Good Agricultural Practice for the Protection of Waters) Regulations, 2009 (S.I. No. 101 of 2009).

(C) Letter dated February 2009 from the Western Development Commission and the attached report on the Study of the Social and Economic Effects of the Relocation of Public Sector Offices to Towns in the Western Region. The Director informed the Members that the full Report was available to them on request.

3. Finance: Statement of Accounts year ended 31st December 2008.

The Director stated that the Finance/Conference Sub Committee had met prior to the Monthly Meeting and had examined in detail the Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31st December 2008 under each heading under Expenditure and Receipts and had recommended that the Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31st December 2008 be accepted as presented.

It was proposed by Cllr. M. Ryan, seconded by Cllr. P. Considine and agreed unanimously that the Statement of Accounts for the year ending 31st December 2008 be accepted as presented.

4. The proposed Dublin Region Water Supply Scheme and its potential impact on the Mid West Region-Presentation by Mr. Gerry Geoghan, RPS Consulting.

Mr. Gerry Geoghan, RPS Consulting made a powerpoint presentation on the potential impacts of water abstraction from the River Shannon for the Dublin Region Water Supply Project under the following headings:

➤ Background/Current Status.

Strategic Study –Feasibility Study-Public Consultation-Short Listing-Preliminary Reports-Shortlisting-Preferred Option.

➤ Need/Extent/Timing-New Water Supply.

Water Demand Growth-Extent of Water Supply Requirements 2016-2031-Abstraction Flow Rates.

➤ Water Supply Options.

Lough Ree-Lough Derg/Parteen Basin-Desalination-Liffey/Barrow

➤ Principal Stakeholder Issues.

Socio Economic-Environmental-Water Conservation.

➤ Option Evaluation Methodology/Evaluation Summary.

Principles-must be sustainable –cannot be at the expense of any other community

➤ Methodology- Assessment of Options/Sustainability Criteria.

➤ Overall Summary.

Preferred Options (1) Lough Derg Abstraction+Storage. (2) Lough Derg Abstraction. (3) Parteen Basin/Weir.

He outlined the other benefits of the preferred option- abstraction from Lough Derg+ Storage i.e. treated water supplies for Offaly/Westmeath.

In Summary he stated that 10 supply options had been evaluated, public consultation had taken place, 150 submissions had been received, a report on the Options had been prepared and a decision on the preferred option will be made by the D.O.E.H. & L.G.

He then answered questions from the Members. In addition to the Mid West Regional Authority's submission to the SEA Consultation process other issues raised by the Members were:

- Will there be further public consultation in the process.
- Desalination process needs to be examined further.
- Other areas outside Dublin have problems with water supply (Cloonlara).
- Demand based on present population trends but that may change-what are the implications and will a low/high population growth scenario apply.
- Flooding in lower Shannon area.
- Impact of proposed extraction on fishing and environment.
- Water Quality-will higher quality be required in contributory streams.

It was agreed that Mr. Geoghan would reply in writing to these issues and the submission dated 4th March 2009 from the Mid West Regional Authority.

5. Regional Economic Strategy- Presentation by Brian Callanan, Shannon Development.

The Director stated that the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) will be a fundamental part of the Regional Planning Guidelines review process and will constitute a chapter in the Regional Planning Guidelines (RPG's).

B. Callanan then addressed the meeting. He stated that Forfás had started the

preparation of Regional Competitive Agendas (RCA's) the purpose of which is to assess how each region in the country can build on its own potential and continue to develop a competitive environment to support enterprise development. The RCAs will highlight opportunities to build on each region's distinctive strengths, identify barriers to these and mechanisms to address them. He said that Forfas had issued the first stage report in the preparation of a pilot Regional Competitiveness Agenda (RCA) for the Mid West Region.

He outlined the main findings of the report as follows:

Competitiveness Factors:

Enterprise and Economy: Mid West has third highest level of per capita output (after Cork and Dublin) and Income (after Dublin and Mid East) although growth rate was below average in 2004-2005: population growth 2000-2006 lower than average.

Mid West has highest proportion of workforce in manufacturing sector in any region: ICT sector dominates: although good growth in medical devices and internationally traded services over the past 10 years.

Skills: high growth in skilled manual categories, declines in unskilled manual: good share of new graduates finding employment; high share of PhD's and Masters Graduates; but high loss of 25-29 age group; high proportion of long term unemployed and early school leavers.

Innovation: strong infrastructure of university and technology parks; high level of business expenditure on R&D; but low levels of state funding on research.

Leadership and local capacity: Urban concentration is happening, but along major routes into Limerick, rather than within city itself: administration in Limerick spread over 4 separate local authorities: wide range of bodies and organisations-need for coherence.

Access and Connectivity: key strength of Shannon Airport: inter-urban motorways; priority issue of N18 Limerick/Galway; broadband coverage no longer a major issue but quality of services and take up of broadband in the

covered area remains an issue.

Quality of Life: very strong natural and cultural amenities, attractive environment in urban centres; social infrastructure; sport and recreation; but weakened by negative issues associated with Limerick City.

He then answered questions from the Members. Among the issues raised were:

- The reason for the high rate of loss of 25-29 age group despite the other positive aspects in the findings of the report.
- The need to review the courses provided by UL/LIT/TI.
- The level of objections by Local Authorities to developments in adjoining Local Authorities and the need for jointly agreed planning and transport strategies for the region.
- The need to confront the high operating costs in the region.
- The need to work together for the benefit of the region.
- The performance of the Mid West region as outlined in the Fitzpatrick Report on Gateways/Hubs.
- The level of Broadband available in the Mid West region.
- A thriving region requires a thriving city.
- High level of manufacturing in the region.

The Cathaoirleach thanked B. Callanan for his presentation and answering the queries raised by the Members.

6. Regional Planning Guidelines (RPG's) –Update Report.

The Director informed the Members that the Planning and Development (Regional Planning Guidelines) Direction 2008 and the Planning and Development (Regional Planning Guidelines) Regulations 2009 (SI No. 100 of 2009) had now been issued by the D.O.E.H. & L.G.

He said the closing date for receipt of submissions on the Issues Paper was 14th April 2009 and he would have a further update at the May monthly meeting.

7. Conferences.

(A) Report on Annual Conference 19/20 February 2009.

The Director informed the meeting that 125 delegates (41 from within and 104 from outside the Mid West region) had attended the Annual Conference on 19/20 February 2009. He stated that some invoices were still outstanding in relation to the conferences.

He again thanked the Members for their support in ensuring a good attendance at the conference.

(B) The attendance of Members at the following conferences was noted and approved:

LAMA conference in the Heritage Hotel, Portlaoise on the 16/17 April 2009-Cllr. C. Hurley.

Kadenza Consultancies, Silver Tassie Hotel, Letterkenny on 3/5 April 2009-Cllr. L. Wallace.

Esperanza Enterprises conference on the 6/8 February 2009 in the Glendelough Hotel, Glendalough, Co. Wicklow-Cllr. C. Crowe.

8. A.O.B.

The Cathaoirleach gave the following report on the New York Work Visit.

In March this year a Mid West delegation attended meetings around St. Patrick's Day in New York. Our Group consisted of members and management of Local Authorities in the region and the Mid West Regional Authority.

Business meetings took place between the Mid West Regional Authority delegation and Tourism Ireland, Aer Lingus NY and Enterprise Ireland. The delegation attended a function of the Clare NY Association, also attended St. Patrick's Day Mass in St. Patrick's Cathedral and participated in the St. Patrick's Day parade.

The Executive also held a meeting with New York business people with interest

in investing in Ireland and the Mid West. It is hoped that these contacts will lead to further meetings with potential investors in the region in the coming months. The Mid West Regional Authority and the Local Authorities in the region will provide the respective Government agencies with necessary information on this region to assist their business of attracting investment and jobs to the Mid West region. Important personal contact points have been made in this respect.

It was highlighted to the Group in meetings that the Irish media's overly negative portrayal of the Irish economic situation was negatively affecting Irish agencies' existing US business and in their attempts to attract new US business to Ireland.

On the tourism front the Group queried Tourism Ireland on the €3m Shannon Airport Catchment Area Fund, where it is being spent and how this spend has performed. The Group also queried the 2009/2010 projected US tourist figures into the Mid West which are expected to be down. Tourism Ireland Chiefs indicated that they intend to focus marketing Ireland in the US on particular market themes and groups (Tour Operators) in particular the older traveller and golf tourism.

The meeting with Aer Lingus highlighted the need for cooperative marketing of the tourism product of the Mid West region for the US market. It is important that the airlines, tourism trade and agencies work together in a consistent way to promote the very fine tourism product this region has to offer. Aer Lingus also highlighted some teething issues Shannon Custom and Border Protection on the US side.

Cllr. P. McMahon complemented the Cathaoirleach and the Director on the amount of work they had undertaken on the work visit and the contacts they had made in New York and referred to the impact of the overly negative publicity created by the media.

This concluded the business of the meeting.