

Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of the Mid West Regional Authority held at 1.30 P.M. on Wednesday 2nd December 2009 in the Council Chamber, Limerick County Council, County Hall, Dooradoyle, Limerick.

Cllr. L. Walsh, Cathaoirleach presided.

Present:

Clare County Council:

Cllrs. G. Flynn, O. Garry, P. Keane, P.J. Kelly, P. McMahon, B. Meaney and S. Scanlon

Limerick City Council:

Cllrs. G. Fahy, J. Leddin and K. Leddin.

Limerick County Council:

Cllrs. M. Donegan, J. Egan, N. Gleeson, S. Keary, W. O'Donnell and L. Walsh.

North Tipperary County Council:

Cllrs. P. Bugler, G. Darcy, S. Hanafin, M. Lowry, M. Ryan and V.O'Dowd.

Absent: Cllrs. R. Butler, C. Crowe, M. Hourigan, D. McCarthy and D. Scully,

Also Present.

Mr. L. Conneally, Director.

Mr. T. Mackey, Designated Manager.

Mr. S. Treacy, Staff Officer.

Mr. R. Tobin, RPG Project Manager.

Ms. M. Collins, E.U. Project Manager.

Mr. C. Lynch, Tipperary Institute.

1. Minutes.

The Minutes of (A) Monthly meeting (B) Finance/Conference sub-committee meeting held on the 4th November 2009 were proposed by Cllr. S. Hanafin, seconded by Cllr. O. Garry and agreed as presented.

2. Matters Arising.

Cllr. J. Egan referred to the Minutes of the Finance/Conference sub-committee. He queried the cost of translating the Regional Planning Guidelines into Irish and recommended that only a minimum number of the documents be printed to reduce costs. Some Members suggested that the documents should only be translated if a copy was requested. Other

Members queried whether it was necessary under legislation to translate the documents into Irish.

In reply the Director quoted Section 10 of the Official Languages Act 2003.

It was proposed by Members to write to the Minister querying the need to translate the Regional Planning Guidelines into Irish due to the high costs involved and the lack of demand for the translated version.

3. Correspondence.

(A) Letter dated 13th November 2009 from Mr. Tony Killeen T.D. Minister of State and attachment re Aer Lingus Operations at Shannon Airport.

(B) Letter dated 18th November 2009 from North Tipperary County Council re: Variation No. 5 of North Tipperary Council County Development Plan 2004-2010.

(C) Letter dated 18th November 2009 from Kerry County Council re: Kenmare Functional Area Draft Local Area Plan.

(D) Letter dated 27th November 2009 from Mr. Tony Killeen T.D. Minister of State and the attached reply from the Minister for Transport in relation to Aer Lingus' proposed cost restructuring plan and implications for the future of transatlantic services at Shannon Airport.

The Director stated that Aer Lingus management had agreed to meet a delegation from the Mid West Regional Authority on the 16th December 2009.

It was agreed that the Cathaoirleach, Cllrs. P. Mc Mahon, M. Donegan, M. Ryan, Limerick City Council representative and the Director would meet with Aer Lingus.

4. Shannon Airport-Address by Martin Moroney, Director, Shannon Airport Authority.

The Cathaoirleach welcomed Martin Moroney, Director, Shannon Airport Authority who then addressed the meeting.

Martin Moroney outlined the 10% reduction in traffic in Shannon Airport for 2009 which he attributed to the economic downturn and the impact of 'Open Skies'. He welcomed the road improvements/upgrades in the region, which he stated will increase the catchment area of the airport and referred to the need for a rail connection the airport.

He outlined the current status regarding discussions with Ryanair as the current 5 year incentive scheme with the airline ends in April 2010. He

pointed out that competition law requires that all airlines must be charged the same. He stated that if agreement is not reached with Ryanair the Shannon Airport Authority will make every effort to get other airlines to provide services to/from Shannon.

He referred to the proposed withdrawal of transatlantic services at Shannon Airport by Aer Lingus. He expressed disappointment at the failure to-date of Aer Lingus to avail of the Custom and Border Protection facility and stressed the importance of Aer Lingus to Shannon Airport. He said the Airport Authority was examining the potential of developing a major international logistics hub at the Shannon. He then answered questions from the Members.

Among the issues raised were:

- The % of income versus outgoing passengers on Ryanair flights.
- The proliferation of airports on the western seaboard.
- The net income per passenger.
- The need to reduce costs at the airport.
- The need to promote the airport and the region outside the Mid West region.
- The attractiveness of ease of access to and car parking at Shannon Airport should be properly marketed.
- The potential for the Mid West Regional Authority/Shannon development/Local Authorities to lease aircraft.
- The need for a national aviation policy for the country

Martin Moroney stated that Shannon Airport was dependant on Tourism business and referred to the need for new improved and competitive tourism product in the region. He said the airport authority was investigating alternative ways of attracting airlines to use Shannon Airport and that this would require generating alternative means of providing income for the airport.

The Cathaoirleach thanked Martin Moroney for his presentation and answering questions from the Members. He said the Regional Authority would assist the airport authority and new airport board in any way it could.

5 . Regional Planning Guidelines (RPG's) Regional Economic Strategy (RES).

(A) Regional Planning Guidelines (RPG's).

The Members noted the Draft Regional Planning Guidelines (RPG's) copy of which had been circulated with the agenda.

R. Tobin outlined the main changes from the previous Draft,

(B) Draft Strategic Environmental Report (SEA).

The Members noted the Draft Strategic Environmental Report (SEA) copy of which had been circulated with the agenda and the Non Technical Summary that had been circulated on the 23rd November 2009.

C. Lynch outlined the background, legislation and process of preparing the Draft Strategic Environmental Report (SEA).

R. Tobin and C. Lynch then answered queries from the Members. Among the issues raised were:

- (a) Areas in places like Slieve Felim not affected by SAC/SPA/NHA designation should be clearly identified and planning permission allowed in these areas.
- (b) Tackling flooding problems should be key part of RPG's. The need for a single agency to deal with flooding issues with absolute power invested in the Minister was raised.
- (c) Water quality in Lough Derg.
- (d) Need for tourism promotion in Limerick which will also benefit the rest of the region.
- (e) The need to facilitate/accommodate development in rural parts of the region.
- (f) The need to facilitate retail development in towns in the peripheral parts of the region as well as Limerick City Centre.
- (g) The need to accept the impact of climate change and the need to balance the potential environmental impacts of removing silt material/vegetation from rivers (and consequent impacts for fish spawning grounds) with the need to mitigate against flood risk to properties and life.
- (d) Key Investment priority schedule should include:
 - (1) By-Pass for Thurles.
 - (2) North West Regional Water Scheme.
 - (3) Improvement to the N 62 Thurles/Templemore/Roscrea/Birr road.
 - (4) Improvement to the N 52 Borrosokane/ Birr road.

Cllr. P. J. Kelly queried the procedures adopted in reviewing the RPG's. In reply the Director stated that the Director's Report on the submissions received on the Issues Paper had been adopted by the Members of the outgoing Authority at the May 2009 monthly meeting. The Director's Report was circulated to the Members of the new Authority at the September 2009 meeting. He also stated that the review of the RPG's was being undertaken in accordance with Chapter 3 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, the Planning and Development (Regional Planning Guidelines) Direction 2008 and the Planning and Development (Regional Planning Guidelines) Regulations 2009.

The Designated Manager complimented R. Tobin, C. Lynch and L. Conneally for the efficient and cost effective manner in which they

produced the Draft Regional Planning Guidelines and Draft Environmental Report and Habitats Directive Assessment. He stressed the importance of the Mid West region being able to compete with other regions to attract Government funding.

It was proposed by Cllr. W. O'Donnell, seconded by Cllr. B. Meaney and agreed that the Draft Regional Planning Guidelines should go on public display in accordance with Section 24(1) of the Planning and Development Act 2000.

Cllr. P. J. Kelly stated he did not agree and requested that this be noted.

6. Combating Antisocial Behaviour.

It was agreed to defer this item to the January 2010 meeting.

7. Conferences.

(A) Annual Conference 2010.

The Director informed the meeting that the Finance/Conference sub-committee had agreed following review of the quotations received that the 2010 Annual Conference would be held in the Greenhills Hotel, Ennis Road, Limerick on the 4/5th February 2010.

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

"Constituents on the Net" conference in the Louis Fitzgerald Hotel, Clondalkin, Dublin on the 4th-6th December 2009: Cllr. C. Crowe.

8. A.O.B. –None.

This concluded the business of the meeting.