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**NORTHERN IRELAND, THE BORDER REGION OF IRELAND AND WESTERN  
SCOTLAND**

**INTERREG VA PROGRAMME**

**(2014 - 2020)**

**CCI No: 2014TC16RFCB047**

**DRAFT MINUTES MONITORING COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Tuesday 27 November 2018**

**Dundalk Institute of Technology**

#### **Attendance**

A list of attendees and apologies is attached at Annex II.

#### **1. Welcome and Introduction by Chairperson**

**The Chair** welcomed attendees to the eighth meeting of the INTERREG VA Programme Monitoring Committee (PMC) 2014 – 2020, and introduced **EU Commission Desk Officer Marianne Van De Vorle**.

**The Chair** also introduced the new **JS Director, Leanne Massey**, who replaces **John Greer**. **The Chair** recorded her thanks to **JS Manager Paul Boylan** for filling the JS Director role during the transition.

**The Chair** thanked Aidan Hoare and his Hospitality students for the lunch provided, and for facilitating the meeting.

**The Chair** also welcomed a number of new Members and Advisors to the Programme Monitoring Committee (PMC), including;

- **Ruth MacDonald** of the Scottish Government, who replaces Robert Gompertz;
- **Philip Mynes** of NICVA, who replaces Bob Harper;
- **Philip Maguire** of the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), who replaces Dr Norman Apsley;
- **Michael Spillane** of the Department of Tourism, Transport and Sport (DTTAS), who replaces Derek O'Neill, and;
- **Jacqueline Healy**, of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, who replaces Stefania Minervino.

**The Chair** thanked **Dr Norman Apsley** for his work on the Programme Monitoring Committee and congratulated him on his retirement.

**The Chair** provided an update on developments in Programme implementation since the previous PMC meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2018 in Ulster University, which consisted of the following main points;

- Brexit negotiations are ongoing and, in recent days, the UK's Withdrawal Agreement has been accepted by the EU Commission to be brought before the UK Parliament;
- **The Chair** quoted the Withdrawal Agreement's Ireland-Northern Ireland protocols "Recalling the Union and the United Kingdom's commitments to the North South PEACE and INTERREG funding programmes under the current multi-annual financial framework and to the maintaining of the current funding proportions for the future programme", in order to highlight both Programmes' relevance to the negotiations. The Programmes are further referenced in the Agreement's Political Declaration;
- The extension of the HMT Treasury guarantee to the end of the Programme period provides a level of reassurance. In addition, the EU Commission's communication on contingency planning for the UK's withdrawal supports the Irish commitment to the Programmes. The SEUPB is working closely with both Member States to explore all options;
- In May 2018, the EU Commission released its Multi Financial Framework Budget for post-2020, which made specific reference to a "PEACE Plus"

programme, which represents a combination of the PEACE Programmes and INTERREG activities. While PEACE Plus is subject to the finalisation of negotiations and the UK's involvement and contribution, it is seen as a positive step for the future of PEACE and INTERREG activities in the region;

- Northern Ireland remains without a functioning Executive and the SEUPB continues to work with the Department of Finance and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform to mitigate any potential risk to the Programmes;
- The Northern Ireland (Executive Formation and Exercise of Functions) Bill passed at Westminster at the end of October may provide NI Departments with some flexibility in managing the decision making process;
- The second call for applications under the Electric Vehicles objective opened in August and closed in November 2018;
- On 21 June 2018, five projects under both PEACE and INTERREG were invited to a state dinner organised by An Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar in honour of the EU Commission President, Jean-Claude Juncker;
- On 13 September, the Minister of State for European Affairs, Helen McEntee, visited SEUPB's Belfast office and two INTERREG projects;
- On 17 September, the SEUPB facilitated a project visit for the Minister for Finance & Public Expenditure and Reform, Paschal Donohoe TD;
- On 24 September, the UK Deputy Ambassador to the EU, Katrina Williams, spent a day hearing from three INTERREG projects;
- Since the previous PMC meeting, eight INTERREG launches have taken place and a total of eight training sessions have been held, attended by 200 plus project participants, and;
- In his absence, **the Chair** welcomed Gerry Finn as the new Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee, and referred to his position on the Programme Monitoring Committees for previous Programmes.

**The Chair** informed Members of project presentations and tours planned for later in the agenda, which feature DKIT as Lead Partner and Partner. She thanked **Dr Paul MacArtain** and **Dr Dominic McLarnon** of the SPIRE II project and **Dr Keith Thornbury** of the BREATH project for accommodating the Committee.

## **2. Agree the Agenda**

The agenda was agreed.

## **3. Conflicts of Interest**

**The Chair** informed Members that the PMC Conflict of Interest register is updated on an annual basis, and requested any conflicts relating to today's meeting were declared.

No potential conflicts of interest were declared.

## **4. Minutes of previous meeting – 17 April 2018**

The Monitoring Committee approved the minutes of 17 April 2018 as a true and accurate record of the previous meeting. The minutes will be uploaded to the SEUPB website.

## **5. Matters arising**

**The Chair** provided an overview of the two matters arising from the previous meeting, the first of which has been resolved.

The second refers to upcoming Steering Committee dates. **The Chair** explained the challenges in providing dates in advance, and outlined upcoming Steering Committee meetings in December 2018 and January 2019.

## 6. Update on Programme Implementation

The MA Director provided an update on Programme implementation and stated that PMC presentations will be circulated to Members following meetings going forward. The presentation consisted of the following main points;

- This PMC previously agreed amendments to the INTERREG VA Cooperation Programme via written procedure. The EU Commission formally agreed the same changes in October 2018, allowing for greater flexibility in assessing applications through a one-stage process;
- The one-stage process was utilised in the recent Electric Vehicles call, which closed in November and is being assessed by the Joint Secretariat (JS) prior to a Steering Committee in 2019;
- Letters of Offer have issued under Priority Axis 4 (Health) at €5.5m; and under Priority Axis 2 (Environment), to the value of €4.7m;
- The Dashboard is operational, providing timely and accurate information on output and spend on a monthly basis in comparison to quarterly eMS reporting, to better inform decision making and planning;
- Work on eMS continues with the system developers, in order to support enhanced functionality and customer experience;
- The Performance Framework is new to the 2014-2020 Programmes as a mandatory programming tool to assess progress;
- To date, eligible expenditure has been achieved as follows;

	<b>Projected Achievement December 2018</b>	<b>Milestone Target December 2018</b>
<b>Research &amp; Innovation</b>	€12.5 m	€6.6m
<b>Environment</b>	€9.9m	€7.8m
<b>Transport</b>	€6.7m	€4.3m
<b>Health</b>	€4.3m	€5.7m

- The Health objective represents a key risk in achieving Performance Framework targets, with €4.3m anticipated by the end of 2018 against the €5.7m target. The SEUPB is working closely with the projects to maximise spend and ensure accuracy of claims;
- The 2017 N+3 target was exceeded by circa €8m, and an over-commitment of around €12m against the €29.3m 2018 target is forecast for the end of December 2018, and;
- The end of 2018 is a key milestone for the first impact evaluation reports, and the evaluators will present their findings at the next PMC.

**AP 1: PMC members to receive meeting presentations going forward**

**AP 2: Impact evaluators to present at next PMC**

**The JS Director** provided a presentation on implementation by thematic area which included the following main points;

- Since the previous meeting, one Steering Committee meeting has taken place, approving additional commitments of around €10m, with one further application not recommended for funding due to State Aid implications;
- A Steering Committee on 06 December will take decisions around elements of the Health and Environment objectives;
- 87% of Programme funding has been committed, at a value of €244.6m;
- Additional workplans have been approved in the CANN and CABB projects under the Environment objective, leading to an increase in 500 hectares of habitats in addition to conservation action plans;
- Under the Marine objective, the Sea Monitor project has been approved by Steering Committee and, while experiencing slight delays relating to expenditure, implementation is under way and the SEUPB is working closely with partners to release payment;
- Approval of Phase 2 of the SWELL project will be examined by the December Steering Committee following successful completion of Phase 1;

- **The JS Director** explained the challenges in the Health objective, including the rejected applications and gaps in population health, beneficiary numbers and cross-border intervention. The SEUPB is working with the Accountable Departments to address the issues and explore how the output commitments can be met, and;
- An issue has also been identified in the specialist training element of the Health objective. The SEUPB has invited expressions of interest from existing partners, and are assessing the responses.

**The Chair** thanked **the MA and JS Directors** and encouraged new Members to ask questions, recognising the complexity of the information provided.

**The Department for Public Expenditure and Reform representative** made the following comments;

- Welcomed the progress against commitments and Performance Framework targets;
- Stated enthusiasm for the SWELL project, which represents a significant amount of funding;
- Welcomed progress on the Electric Vehicles call and the monitoring arrangements around the Health objective;
- Stated the importance of communicating the message of a high-performing Programme in the current political environment, and;
- Discussed the shift of focus from commitment to drawdown of expenditure at this stage of Programme implementation.

**The Department of Finance representative** commended the 87% commitment achieved and also emphasised the shift of focus to the drawdown of expenditure from the EU Commission.

In their absence, **the Department of Finance representative** conveyed comments on the Health objective from **the Department of Health NI representative** regarding their concerns on the low 14% achievement against the 'number of beneficiaries' output.

**The JS Director** explained the underachievement relates to a restrictive interpretation of the output indicator measurement within the Performance Framework which affected how it was reported, and the JS have been providing the project partners with relevant additional support.

**The Environmental Pillar representative (2)** requested further detail on the applications received under the Electric Vehicles call.

**The JS Director and JS Manager** provided a response, detailing one application received at a value of €9m from a consortium partnership led by the East Border Region. The application proposes the funding of 73 rapid charger locations and associated research activity within the eligible area.

**The EU Commission Desk Officer** thanked the **JS Director** for her presentation, and commented on the Performance Framework and the result orientation of the current Programming period. She also acknowledged the challenges around the Health objective, which is only categorised as a “serious failure” if achievement in two or more outputs is lower than 65%.

**The Monitoring Committee;**

- Noted the progress in implementation of the Programme.

## **7. Update on Performance Framework**

**The Chair** introduced the Performance Framework update paper, which will feature as a standing item on future Monitoring Committee agendas, detail of which was provided in **the MA Director’s** Implementation presentation.

**The Monitoring Committee:**

- Noted the progress that has been made with regards to achievement of 2018 milestones and the Performance Framework.

## 8. Update on implementation of the Communications Strategy

**The Communications Manager** provided a presentation which outlined upcoming project launches, the positive or neutral tone of media coverage surrounding the Programme and SEUPB's engagement with stakeholders over social media.

### **The Monitoring Committee;**

- Noted the Communications Activities since the last PMC meeting, and;
- Noted progress in implementation of the Communications Strategy.

## 9. Evaluation Plan Update

**The Chair** introduced the Evaluation Plan update paper as provided in the meeting papers and introduced **Sarah McCarthy** of **SJC Consultancy** as the consultant appointed to conduct the INTERREG VA and PEACE IV Implementation Evaluation.

**Sarah McCarthy** provided a summary presentation on the Implementation Evaluation and the resulting recommendations

**The Department of Finance representative** thanked **Sarah McCarthy** for an informative and insightful report, and commended the SEUPB for undertaking the evaluation and acknowledging any issues identified.

**The Environmental Pillar representative (1)** requested further information on the views of seven unsuccessful applicants who responded to the evaluation survey.

**Sarah McCarthy** provided a response, stating the feedback was generally positive, and unsuccessful applicants had welcomed the debriefing meetings and were accepting of the review process.

**The MA Director** referred to the processing times outlined in the consultant's presentation and explained the reasons behind any perceived delays in issuing Letters

of Offer, including the implementation of pre-commencement conditions. **The MA Director** also outlined proposals to issue future Letters of Offer with time-bound conditions, and acknowledged the support of JS and FCU staff in developing workflows and financial data.

**The Wheel representative** commended the SEUPB on the quality of paperwork, and Sarah McCarthy on the integrity and transparency of the evaluation.

The Monitoring Committee;

- Noted progress made in implementing the Programme's Evaluation Plan.
- Noted the Executive Summary and recommendations of the Implementation Evaluation report– this was also presented to the PEACE IV PMC at their meeting on 07 November 2018

#### **10. A.O.B.**

**The NILGA/ UUP representative** queried the timeline for commencement of developmental work on the PEACE Plus Programme and consultation with councils.

**The Chair** welcomed the inclusion of the PEACE Plus Programme at an early stage in the development of the Multi Financial Framework budget however, she explained the Programme is dependent on the UK's involvement and contribution following withdrawal negotiations.

**The Chair** informed Members the SEUPB has appointed ASM to conduct exploratory research into potential areas for future funding on a cross-community and cross-border basis. Formal consultation will commence upon approval from both Member States, and **the Chair** will meet with NILGA representatives in December to discuss future planning.

**The IBEC representative** made the following comments;

- Commended the SEUPB on progress since the Referendum result was announced, and acknowledged the value of the Good Friday Agreement in Brexit negotiations;
- Expressed concern that the Programmes will be evaluated in a post-Brexit environment against criterion determined pre-Brexit;

- Queried which business projects may have difficulties drawing down funds and delivering on their original objectives post-Brexit;
- Emphasised the importance of the Programmes' visibility in adjusting to the effects of Brexit, and;
- Encouraged a timely response in implementing the PEACE Plus Programme.

In response, **the Chair** assured **the IBEC representative** that the SEUPB is in continuous discussions with the EU Commission and both Member States and is taking all necessary steps to prepare for the impact of Brexit.

**The Scottish Government representative** raised the uncertainty around Scotland's involvement in future Programmes, as the Peace Plus Programme appears to exclude Scotland and maritime borders.

**The Chair** pointed out the current movement to remove the border maritime restrictions, which could allow Scottish involvement in the Peace Plus Programme, and outlined the value of Scotland's role in the INTERREG Programmes to date.

#### **11. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting will take place in Scotland in Spring 2019 however, **the Chair** advised there may be a need to schedule an exceptional meeting prior to the UK's exit from the EU in March.

#### **12. Project Presentations and Visits- SPIRE II and BREATH projects**

**The Chair** thanked DKIT for hosting today's meeting and informed Members the Changing Lives project, also partnered by DKIT under the Health objective could, regrettably, not be facilitated in today's agenda and will present at a later date.

**The Chair** continued to introduce **Dr Dominic McLarnon of Ulster University** and **Dr Paul MacArtain of DKIT**, representing the SPIRE II project, who provided an update presentation since their initial presentation at the previous PMC meeting.

Following the SPIRE II presentation and questions from Members, **the Chair** introduced **Dr Keith Thornbury of DKIT** and the BREATH project. Members received the original presentation on the project from **Dr John Lockhart** of the University of Western Scotland at a PMC meeting on 06 September 2017 in Glasgow, and noted today's presentation by way of update.

**The Chair** concluded the meeting, before Members divided into groups to tour the project facilities.

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**ANNEX I**

**ACTION POINTS/ISSUES OF CLARIFICATION**

**ARISING FROM MONITORING COMMITTEE**

**Tuesday 27 November 2018, Dundalk Institute of Technology**

**ACTION POINTS**

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>TIMING</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>
PMC members to receive meeting presentations going forward	Following PMC meetings	Managing Authority
Impact evaluators to present at next PMC	2019 PMC meetings	Managing Authority

## **ANNEX II**

**Attendance – INTERREG VA Programme Monitoring Committee – Tuesday 27 November 2018, Dundalk Institute of Technology**

### **Chair**

Gina McIntyre Chief Executive Officer, SEUPB

### **Members**

Cllr Alex Baird NILGA/ UUP

Paul Boylan Acting JS Head of Unit, SEUPB

Prof. Sue Christie Council for Nature, Conservation and the Countryside

Robin Clarke Highlands and Islands Enterprise

Catherine Clynes DPER

Ivan Cooper The Wheel

Sean Cronin Environmental Pillar

Michael D’Arcy IBEC

Frank Duffy Department of Finance NI

Mark Feeney MA Director, SEUPB

Jacqueline Healy Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission

Blair Horan Irish Congress of Trade Unions, Ireland

Ruth MacDonald Scottish Government

Philip Maguire	CBI
Leanne Massey	SEUPB
John Maxwell	Scottish Government
Dominic McCullough	Department of Finance NI (DoF)
Geraldine McGahey	The Equality Commission NI
Dr Aedin McLoughlin	Environmental Pillar
Nicola Mellis	Scottish Government
Philip Mynes	NICVA
Ken Nelson	Intertrade Ireland
Gearoid O'Keeffe	Dept. of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER)
Paul Sheridan	Corporate Services Director, SEUPB
Linda Stewart	Scotland Europa
Cllr Sean Smith	North West Regional Assembly
Marianne Van De Vorle	EU Commission

**Advisors**

Susan Bardon	Department of Jobs, Enterprise & Innovation (DJEI)
Caroline Coleman	National Contact Point, Scotland (SEUPB)
Louise Kenny	Department of Health Ireland
Dave Loyal	Department for the Economy
Therese Lynch	Certifying Authority, SEUPB
John McCandless	Communications, SEUPB

Philip McMurray Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)

Michael Power NISRA

James Russell MA, SEUPB

Mark Stranaghan Department for Infrastructure

Michael Spillane DTTAS

Jim Sutherland Department for Infrastructure

### **Observers**

Elaine Farmer JS, SEUPB

Catherine Clynes Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

Emer McGeough NSMC

James Russell Managing Authority, SEUPB

Judith Scott NISRA

Clare Smyth DTTAS

### **Presenters**

Sarah McCarthy SJ Cartmin Consultancy

Dr Keith Thornbury BREATH project

Paul MacArtain SPIRE II Project

Dominic McLarnon SPIRE II Project

**Secretariat (SEUPB)**

Tara McCormick

Managing Authority (minutes)

Thomas McGarvey

Managing Authority

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### **ANNEX III**

#### **Glossary of acronyms used in the minutes:**

<b>CNCC</b>	<b>Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside</b>
<b>DAERA</b>	<b>Department Of Agriculture, Environment &amp; Rural Affairs</b>
<b>DBEI</b>	<b>Department of Business, Enterprise &amp; Innovation (Ireland)</b>
<b>DfC</b>	<b>Department for Communities (Northern Ireland)</b>
<b>DfC (NI)</b>	<b>Department for the Economy</b>
<b>DHPCLG</b>	<b>Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government</b>
<b>DoE</b>	<b>Department of Education (Northern Ireland)</b>
<b>DoF</b>	<b>Department of Finance (Northern Ireland)</b>
<b>DoH</b>	<b>Department of Health (Northern Ireland)</b>

<b>DJEI</b>	<b>Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation</b>
<b>DPER</b>	<b>Department of Public Expenditure and Reform</b>
<b>DfI</b>	<b>Department for Infrastructure</b>
<b>GDPR</b>	<b>General Data Protection Regulation</b>
<b>HMT</b>	<b>Her Majesty's Treasury (UK)</b>
<b>ICTU</b>	<b>Irish Congress of Trade Unions</b>
<b>NICVA</b>	<b>Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action</b>
<b>NILGA</b>	<b>Northern Ireland Local Government Association</b>
<b>NISRA</b>	<b>Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency</b>
<b>NSMC</b>	<b>North South Ministerial Council</b>
<b>NWRA</b>	<b>Northern Western Regional Assembly</b>
<b>SCVO</b>	<b>Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations</b>

**SEUPB**                      **Special European Union Programmes Body**

**JS**                              **Joint Secretariat**

**MA**                              **Managing Authority**

**DRAFT**