



Special EU Programmes Body
Foras Um Chláir Speisialta An AE
Boord O Owre Ocht UE Projects



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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 17th April 2018

The Loughview Suite, University of Ulster, Jordanstown

Attendance

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

1. Welcome and Introduction by Chairperson

The Chair welcomed attendees to the seventh meeting of the INTERREG VA Programme Monitoring Committee (PMC) 2014 – 2020.

The Chair introduced the new **EU Commission Desk Officer** in attendance, **Marianne Van De Vorle**, who replaces **Iva Gailly**, and **acting JS Head of Unit, Paul Boylan**, replacing **John Greer**.

The Chair also welcomed **Geoff Nuttall** of NICVA, and **Susan Bardon** of DBEI, who replaces retiring Gerry Wrynn, to their first PMC meeting.

The Chair asked that her thanks to **Iva Gailly**, **Gerry Wrynn** and **John Greer** were recorded for their extensive work on the INTERREG Programme.

The Chair provided an update on developments in Programme implementation since the previous PMC meeting on 6th September 2017, which consisted of the following main points;

- Northern Ireland-Ireland cooperation remains a leading priority in Brexit negotiations, and is recognised as a unique situation requiring unique solutions;
- The SEUPB are encouraged by specific mention of the continuation of North-South cooperation, and a commitment to the current Peace and Interreg Programmes, in the EU-UK Joint Report, released in December 2017;
- A commitment to future Programmes is understood to be included within the EU Commission's Multi-Annual Financial Framework, which will be published on 2nd May;
- **The Chair** provided reassurance of the certainties around funding for the current programming period, provided by the UK HMT guarantee;
- The lack of a functioning Northern Ireland Executive has not unduly impacted the implementation of the Programmes, at this time, and;
- **The Chair** outlined two recent International events of interest; the SEUPB's major showcasing event in Brussels in November 2017, and a visit from the EU Commission's Regional Development on a fact finding mission in March 2018. She relayed the positive feedback from both events.

2. Project visits – the ECME and Spire 2 project

The Chair reminded Members of previous interest in visiting the projects being discussed in PMC meeting papers. To this end, **the Chair** thanked the University of Ulster for hosting today's meeting, and provided a brief outline of two INTERREG VA-funded projects under Objective 1.1: Research and Innovation; the SPIRE 2 and ECME projects.

The Members participated in tours of the two projects, led by ECME's Jim McLaughlin and Spire 2's Max Morrow.

Following the tours, the Committee returned to the meeting room and resumed normal business.

The Chair hoped that the Committee enjoyed the project tours, which provide insight into the utilisation of INTERREG VA funding in cross-border partnerships. **The Chair** stated that the next PMC meeting will follow a similar format, and incorporate a project visit in the Health sector.

The acting JS Head of Unit discussed the merits of the two projects and the project partnerships, and the innovation of the cross-border PHD papers which will be produced as a result of this intervention.

3. Agree Agenda

The agenda was agreed.

4. 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.

5. Minutes of previous meeting – 06 September 2017

The Monitoring Committee approved the minutes of 06 September 2017 as a true and accurate record of the previous meeting. The minutes will be uploaded to the SEUPB website.

6. Matters arising

The Chair provided an overview of the single matter arising from the previous meeting, which has been addressed.

7. Update on Programme Implementation

The MA Director provided a brief update on Programme implementation. In his concluding comments, **the MA Director** committed to updating the Committee on achievement against the Programme's Performance Framework targets at the next meeting, in advance of the requirement to report achievement against 2018 Milestones to the EU Commission in 2019.

The MA Director invited **the acting JS Head of Unit** to provide further detail on Programme implementation to date.

The acting JS Head of Unit provided a presentation on implementation by thematic area which included the following main points;

- Following Steering Committee decisions on the €32m SWELL project under the Transitional Water Quality Objective, a further Marine project (Sea Monitor) and 3 Health projects, circa 98% Programme commitment is anticipated by June-July 2018;
- Significant mobilisation activity is taking place, with launch events having taken place and full staffing compliments in place in the majority of projects;
- All contracted projects have produced a progress report on the eMS system and the first claims for expenditure are expected in the coming weeks;
- The SEUPB facilitated a thematic project meeting as a platform for the sharing of information, technical issues and best practice, and;
- The SEUPB are encouraged by the positive progress in Programme implementation, and continue to work towards full Programme committal.

The EU Commission Desk Officer welcomed the presentation on progress to date and emphasised the need to focus on processing expenditure claims.

The EU Desk Officer also agreed with the proposed approach to the 2018 Performance Framework targets and advised the SEUPB to also be mindful of the final Performance Framework targets.

The DPER representative made the following comments;

- Welcomed the opportunity to visit the University of Ulster's projects at today's meeting;
- Congratulated the SEUPB on the closure of the INTERREG IVA Programme, and on designation of the current Programme;
- Welcomed the high commitment levels across all thematic areas of the Programme, and the positive message this conveys in terms of potential future Programmes;
- With regards to achievement of N+3 targets, **the DPER representative** encouraged the SEUPB in actively seeking solutions to manage expenditure risks;
- Welcomed the SWELL project's progression to Stage 2 of the assessment process, and;
- Discussed the Department's aim to further progress the Electric Vehicles theme under the Sustainable Transport objective.

The DoF representative commended the SEUPB's progress in achieving the current commitment levels and stated the Department's support of overcommitment up to 5% of the Programme value. He asked the SEUPB to share the upcoming Steering Committee dates in advance for monitoring purposes.

With regards to the Electric Vehicles theme, **the DoF representative** highlighted the Department's willingness to proceed when agreement on an appropriate proposal can be reached with Accountable Departments.

Monitoring Committee members provided the following comments and observations;

- Requested more information on the SEUPB's confidence in meeting N+3 targets in 2019;
- Thanked the SEUPB for the perspective gained by the opportunity to tour projects;
- Expressed concern over the 57% commitment under the Environment theme, and the lack of bidders to the original Electric Vehicles call for applications;
- Provided feedback from recent meetings with Nissan and Renault, including their disappointment over low Electric Vehicle sales due to customer concerns over limited charging points and range;
- Requested further detail on the revised Electric Vehicles call, and ;

- Requested further detail on the SEUPB's plans to increase Electric Vehicle usage and to encourage electric suppliers and wider organisations to provide rapid charging parking locations.

The Chair provided a brief background on the Electric Vehicles call under Objective 3: Sustainable Transport, and asked **the acting JS Head of Unit** to provide further detail.

The acting JS Head of Unit described the Electric Vehicle content within the INTERREG VA Cooperation Programme and previous unsuccessful attempts to engage with providers in the three jurisdictions.

In relation to the Environment theme commitment level, he explained that the approval of the MARPAMM project and the commitment of funds reserved for the SWELL project would deliver 100% commitment against the theme by June or July 2018.

He detailed issues affecting implementation of the Electric Vehicles theme, including the commercial nature of ESB Ireland and the associated intervention rate and state aid implications. However, **the acting JS Head of Unit** described recent policy changes in Ireland, including the ambitions around Electric Vehicles within Ireland's 2040 Strategy, as conducive to the release of a revised call for applications. An update will be provided to the PMC in due course.

The MA Director provided a response regarding N+3 targets, assuring Members of the SEUPB's strategy to overachieve on this year's N+3 targets.

The acting JS Head of Unit informed Members of the Joint Secretariat's prudent approach to forecasting until performance data and performance against targets is available on the eMS system.

The Chair provided further clarification on collaboration with relevant Accountable Departments to design the Electric Vehicles call, and the distribution of under-commitment and overcommitment across Programme areas, dependent on where impact and achievement of Programme outputs can be maximised.

The Scottish Government representative stated that expansion of the Electric Vehicle network remains high in Scottish Government's priorities, with funding under reserve for its development. The Scottish Government are actively involved in discussions and eager to participate in a solution which links the three jurisdictions.

Monitoring Committee Members made the following comments and observations;

- Welcomed news of the event held to share best practice and discussed the value of such interventions;
- Welcomed the partner training event proposed for May in Scotland as an ongoing resource and level of support;
- Cautioned the SEUPB on developing the Electric Vehicles theme in the style of the UK Government's Smart Meters Initiative;
- Raised concerns over Northern Ireland's eligibility for cross border cooperation funding post- Brexit;
- Suggested undertaking assessment and evaluation of the various application models across INTERREG Transnational Programmes, including the Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme (NPA), to the benefit of future potential applicants;
- Requested more information on the length of time required in developing and agreeing new Programmes, and when design of successor Programmes will commence;
- Questioned whether discussions are taking place regarding alternative funding, in the event that the UK is ineligible for cross-border EU funding;

The acting JS Head of Unit provided two observations. Firstly, he informed Members that Brexit and its implications on project delivery are integral aspects of project risk registers, and closely monitored by the Joint Secretariat team.

Secondly, **the acting JS Head of Unit** discussed the upcoming changes in GDPR regulation, and the methods projects such as ECME will employ in managing extensive personal and medical data going forward. He raised both points to provide Members with insight into the daily practicalities and issues faced by both projects and the SEUPB.

The Chair provided a response which consisted of the following points;

- **The Chair** reminded Members of SEUPB's role as contact point for the NPA and various other pan-European Programmes. Lessons learned from these Programmes have influenced the current Peace and Interreg Programmes and will continue to provide best practice reference for any potential successor Programmes;

- Thanked Members for their comments and expressed her optimism regarding future Programmes, and in working to the deadline imposed by the HMT guarantee;
- Detailed the normal Programme cycle, prior to the Referendum result, and explained that planning for future Programmes would normally commence in a year's time. However, circumstances/ potential inclusion of a successor INTERREG Programme in May's Multi Financial Framework has accelerated the process. As a result, internal discussions and initial meetings with Member States will commence in the coming weeks;
- **The Chair** informed Members of existing opportunities within the Transnational Interreg Programmes, where involvement of a "third" country outside the EU is permitted. She assured Members that all options are being explored, and;
- **The Chair** emphasised SEUPB's establishment as a North-South Body under the Good Friday Agreement, and is therefore subject to wider EU/Brexit- related matters.

The DPER representative reiterated the Irish Government's position since the announcement of the EU Referendum decision in supporting full implementation of the current PEACE and INTERREG Programmes, and any successor Programmes post 2020.

The DPER representative discussed the assurance offered by the December 2017 EU-UK Joint Report and looked forward to the 2nd May release of the Multi Annual Financial Framework in providing further information and context.

The EU Commission representative agreed with Members' comments relating to the December 2017 report, and advised that the Commission are also awaiting the outcome of the Brexit negotiations.

The Scottish Government representative and **the DoF representative** were encouraged by the assurances provided regarding completion of the current Programmes. They advised caution and patience until these assurances are translated into policy decisions.

AP 1: SEUPB to provide update on achievement against Performance Framework at next PMC meeting

AP 2: SEUPB to provide PMC with list of upcoming Steering Committee dates where possible

The Monitoring Committee;

- Noted the progress in implementation of the Programme.

8. Update on implementation of the Communications Strategy

The Chair asked **the Communications Manager** to provide a presentation on progress in implementing 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, the launch of the new SEUPB website and SEUPB's engagement with stakeholders over social media.

Monitoring Committee Members made the following comments;

- Noted press coverage of the Programme in Scotland since January 2018;
- Noted relatively low Programme awareness levels in Scotland, and encouraged continued focus in raising those figures;
- Offered their support in working with the Communications team to raise awareness of the Programme in Scotland;
- Queried whether stakeholder analysis has defined the type of socio-economic group in which awareness is at its highest level, and;
- Discussed the importance of the Communications element of the Programmes in transferring knowledge from the Interreg Programme and among projects.

The Communications Manager responded, stating that the Stakeholder Survey is broken down by demographic and age group, rather than profession or socio economic grouping. He confirmed the impact figures are immeasurable due to low awareness levels in Scotland.

He confirmed the SEUPB has procured the services of a Scottish based PR Agency to help raise the profile of the Programme in Western Scotland.

The Chair thanked **the Communications Manager** for his presentation and the Committee Member for his offer of assistance in increasing awareness of the Programme in Scotland.

The Monitoring Committee;

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

9. Annual Implementation Report 2017 – for approval

The Chair introduced the Annual Implementation Report (AIR) update paper to the Committee for approval in advance of the regulatory requirement to submit the AIR to the EU Commission by 31th May 2018.

The EU Commission Desk Officer submitted comments in advance of today's meeting which will be incorporated, and **the Chair** invited comments from the Committee.

The DoF representative stated his intention to contact the SEUPB separately over a number of minor amendments to wording within the Report.

The Monitoring Committee approved the Annual Implementation Report for the INTERREG VA Programme, subject to any requested amendments.

10. Review Update and Procedure Revision

The Chair introduced the Review Procedure update paper, informing Members of one Review meeting since the previous PMC, which upheld the decision of the Steering Committee.

The Chair introduced a revised Review Procedure and a new Review Request Template and explained the background to their development. She invited comments from the Committee.

Monitoring Committee Members; welcomed the revised procedure in providing focus in the review process.

The Monitoring Committee;

- Noted the information on reviews conducted since the last PMC meeting;
- Pending amendments, formally approved the amended procedure

11. Evaluation Plan Update

The Chair introduced the Evaluation Plan update paper, and reminded Members of the appointment of SJ Cartmin to undertake the PEACE IV and INTERREG VA implementation evaluation, which has now entered its second year.

The Chair informed Members that contracts for the four impact evaluations have commenced, and their reports will be submitted between November and December 2018.

The Chair welcomed comments from the Committee.

The Scotland Europa representative emphasised the importance of the upcoming changes to GDPR and the potential risk involved, and welcomed **the acting JS Head of Unit's** previous point on inclusion of GDPR in project risk registers.

The Chair agreed, and stated the SEUPB's aim to provide Lead Partner training sessions on GDPR, in order to establish clarity on expectations and the roles of data processors and data controllers, in relation to funded projects.

The MA Director stated that INTERACT, as designers of the eMS system, are fully aware of the changing GDPR requirements and will adapt the system accordingly.

The Monitoring Committee:

- Noted the progress made in implementing the Programme's Evaluation plan;
- Noted the recommendation of, and responses to, the Implementation Evaluation interim report, and;
- Noted the progress in initialising the Impact Evaluations for the Programme

12. A.O.B.

The Chair informed Members of **the EU Desk Officer's** request to discuss the EU Commission's communication "Boosting Growth and Cohesion in the EU Border Regions" and its resulting Action Points, copies of which were supplied to Members for their reference.

The EU Commission Desk Officer thanked **the Chair** and outlined the 2017 Communication as a result of two years' work in identifying obstacles faced by EU citizens in crossing territorial land borders on a daily basis.

The resulting ten action points, which span various sectors including employment, healthcare, institutional matters and information services, are being progressed by the Border Focal Point team within DG REGIO on a multi-governance level.

The EU Commission Desk Officer emphasised the relevance of this communication to INTERREG stakeholders, regardless of the Brexit negotiations, and stated the communication will inform future legislation and the design of future Programmes.

The EU Commission Desk Officer also informed Members of the launch, in January 2018, of an online platform for INTERREG stakeholders, to facilitate the sharing of experience and best practice, and advised the Committee to share the link with relevant parties.

The Chair thanked the **EU Desk Officer** and invited Members to read the Communication and tender any queries to the SEUPB.

13. Date of next meeting

The Chair concluded the meeting, informing Members the next meeting will take place in autumn 2018 in the Border Region and will try to facilitate visits to a Health project.

ANNEX I

**ACTION POINTS/ISSUES OF CLARIFICATION
ARISING FROM MONITORING COMMITTEE**

Tuesday 17 April 2018, University of Ulster, Jordanstown

ACTION POINTS

ACTION	TIMING	RESPONSIBILITY
1. SEUPB to provide update on achievement against Performance Framework at next PMC meeting	Next PMC meeting	Managing Authority
2. SEUPB to provide PMC with list of upcoming Steering Committee dates	ASAP	JS/ MA

ANNEX II

Attendance – INTERREG VA Programme Monitoring Committee – 17 April 2018, University of Ulster, Jordanstown

Chair

Gina McIntyre Chief Executive Officer, SEUPB

Members

Cllr Alex Baird	NILGA/ UUP
Paul Boylan	Acting JS Head of Unit, SEUPB
Alison Cairns	Scottish Council for Voluntary Action
Robin Clarke	Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Sean Cronin	Environmental Pillar
Frank Duffy	Department of Finance NI
Dr Maura Farrell	Irish Rural Link
Mark Feeney	MA Director, SEUPB
Blair Horan	Irish Congress of Trade Unions, Ireland
John Maxwell	Scottish Government
Brian McCann	Confederation of British Industry (CBI)
Dominic McCullough	Department of Finance NI (DoF)
Ken Nelson	Intertrade Ireland
Cllr Dermot Nicholl	NILGA/ SF
Geoff Nuttall	NICVA
Gearoid O'Keeffe	Dept. of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER)
Paul Sheridan	Corporate Services Director, SEUPB
Linda Stewart	Scotland Europa
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)
Elaine Colgan	Department of Health Northern Ireland
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
Jim Sutherland	Department for Infrastructure

Observers

Elaine Farmer	JS, SEUPB
Catherine Clynes	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
Emer McGeough	NSMC
Clare Smyth	DTTAS

Secretariat (SEUPB)

Tara McCormick	Managing Authority (minutes)
Grainne Vallely	Managing Authority

Apologies

Wesley Aston	Ulster Farmers Union
Michael D'Arcy	IBEC
Sam Curran	Scottish Environmental Protection Agency
Ruth Gallagher	Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission
Alan Hampson	Scottish Natural Heritage
Ivan Cooper	The Wheel
Avril Hall Callaghan	ICTU Northern Ireland
Cian O'Lionain	DHPCLG

ANNEX III

Glossary of acronyms used in the minutes:

CNCC	Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside
DAERA	Department Of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs
DBEI	Department of Business, Enterprise & Innovation (Ireland)
DfC	Department for Communities (Northern Ireland)
DfC (NI)	Department for the Economy
DHPCLG	Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government
DoE	Department of Education (Northern Ireland)
DoF	Department of Finance (Northern Ireland)
DoH	Department of Health (Northern Ireland)
DJEI	Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
DPER	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
DfI	Department for Infrastructure
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
HMT	Her Majesty's Treasury (UK)
ICTU	Irish Congress of Trade Unions

NICVA	Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action
NILGA	Northern Ireland Local Government Association
NISRA	Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency
NSMC	North South Ministerial Council
NWRA	Northern Western Regional Assembly
SCVO	Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations
SEUPB	Special European Union Programmes Body
JS	Joint Secretariat
MA	Managing Authority