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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

Thursday 30th May 2019

Radisson Blu Hotel, The Royal Mile, Edinburgh

Attendance

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

1. Welcome and Introduction by Chairperson

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

Noting that the venue was outside the eligible area, **the Chair** informed Members that several project partners are Edinburgh-based, and it was a convenient location to coordinate across the three jurisdictions. Also, the meeting was originally scheduled to compliment an exhibition to be held in Scottish Parliament buildings, which has now been rescheduled to September 2019.

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

- **Anne Marie Caulfield** of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER), who replaces Gearoid O’Keeffe;
- **Ruth MacDonald** of Scottish Government, who replaces Robert Gompertz;

- **Donna Brodie** of the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA), who replaces Jason Watts;
- **Nicola Mellis** of Scottish Government's International Innovation, who replaces Dr Brigitte Vogele;
- **Gillian Macdonald** of Scottish Natural Heritage, who replaces Alan Hampson, and;
- **Wendy Cooke** of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), who replaces Philip McMurray.

The Chair thanked **Avril Hall Callaghan** and **Caitlin Conneely** for their work on the Programme Monitoring Committee and Steering Committees, congratulating Ms Callaghan on her retirement and Ms Conneely on her new job role.

In addition, **the Chair** welcomed **Mark Hannify**, Ireland's Consulate General to Scotland. Currently based in Scotland, Mr Hannify will soon join the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) in Armagh.

The Chair provided an update on developments in Programme implementation since the previous PMC meeting on 27th November 2018 in the Dundalk Institute of Technology, which consisted of the following main points;

- Previous Programme Monitoring Committee (PMC) meetings have concentrated on commitment levels and call processing. Today's meeting will shift focus to project progress;
- **The Chair** welcomed suggestions on project venues which could accommodate future PMC meetings;
- Brexit has been delayed until October 2019. The SEUPB continue to work with their Sponsor Departments to implement the PEACE IV and INTERREG VA Programmes, and await the outcome of the political negotiations;
- **The Chair** congratulated all the MEPs on their recent appointment, and specifically the 3 MEPs in Northern Ireland in the absence of an assembly, and welcomed the opportunity to work with them;
- The SEUPB hopes for a successful conclusion to the current talks aimed at restoring power sharing in the Northern Ireland Executive. The SEUPB has worked closely with the Department of Finance NI (DoF) to mitigate any potential risks to the Programmes caused by the absence of a functioning Executive;

- In March 2019, the EU Parliament approved a regulation which allows for the continuation and conclusion of the PEACE IV and INTERREG VA Programmes regardless of the Brexit outcome. **The Chair** welcomed the news in providing a level of security in uncertain times;
- As previously communicated, the EU's Multi Financial Framework budget includes provision for a future PEACE PLUS Programme, which will include INTERREG activity and is supported by the UK and Irish Governments. The SEUPB has begun high-level background work and aim to commence consultation at the end of 2019;
- In February 2019, the SEUPB's Managing Authority (MA) held Project Forecasting training, attended by 165 representatives of Lead Partners. The training reflects the prioritisation of effective expenditure and forecasting, with Lead Partners encouraged to forecast, identify and return any surplus funding for reallocation, and;
- The SEUPB has engaged with Think People Consulting to develop innovative approaches in delivering internal and external training.

2. Agree the Agenda

The Chair suggested changes to the agenda due to flight delays earlier in the morning, and informed Members of project presentations planned for later in the afternoon. 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 be declared.

No potential conflicts of interest were declared.

4. Minutes of previous meeting – 27 November 2018

The Monitoring Committee approved the minutes of 27 November 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, both of which have been actioned.

6. Update on Programme Implementation

The MA Director provided an update on Programme implementation which consisted of the following main points;

- The INTERREG VA Programme has achieved a commitment level of 97%, representing a value of €273.6m (ERDF + match);
- The Population Health sub-theme call opened in February 2019 and six applications have been received;
- The Electric Vehicles call remains under assessment
- The Dashboard is proving useful in understanding project expenditure in real-time, and in tracking progress against the Performance Framework. SEUPB's MA and Joint Secretariat (JS) are collaborating to tailor the dashboard to the requirements of the remaining Programme period;
- The SEUPB is working as part of the developer's core design team to build a reformed eMS system for the next Programming period 2020- 2027;
- The Performance Framework is new to the 2014-2020 Programmes as a mandatory programming tool to monitor progress. The INTERREG VA Programme has achieved its Performance Framework targets to date;
- The SEUPB has overachieved the 2019 N+3 target of €24.8m by around €0.6m, as of 30 April 2019. An increase to €20.9m cumulative overachievement is expected by December 2019;
- Member States have, in principle approved an overcommitment level of 105% across both Programmes. Taking pending proposals and calls and slippage into

consideration, INTEREG VA commitment is anticipated around 99.9%. This remains under continual review;

- The second implementation evaluation report was completed in October 2018, and an update on progress against the report's recommendations was provided to this PMC in February 2019. A further update has been provided in today's meeting papers. Comments were welcomed, and;
- The impact evaluations for Priority Axis 3: Sustainable Transport and Priority Axis 4: Health and Social Care are proceeding as per contract. Delays in producing the draft reports for the two remaining Axis (Research and Innovation and Environment) have been addressed with the sole evaluator.

The Environmental Pillar representative queried the Electric Vehicle allocation figures and the delivery date for Priority Axis 3: Sustainable Transport. **The MA Director** provided clarification on the figures and stated the Sustainable Transport evaluators are in attendance and will provide an update regarding Priority Axis 3.

The Highlands and Island Enterprise representative thanked **the MA Director** for his report and asked whether the SEUPB are confident the delayed contracts will be delivered in a timely manner and able to impact on the remainder of the Programme.

In response, **the MA Director** discussed measures in place to monitor delivery of the evaluations, including weekly communication and scheduled meetings. While there is a delay in two evaluation reports the SEUPB are confident that interim workshops will be delivered by the end of Quarter 1 2020.

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

- SEUPB priorities for the remainder of 2019 include ensuring full commitment against outputs and implementation of all projects committed to date;
- Academic partners, PHD students and post-doctoral students are in place across Priority Axis 1: Research and Innovation, and evidence of shared learning and partnerships is emerging;
- The SEUPB is currently assessing additional funding for the Co-Innovate project. The project is on track to achieve or exceed its outputs by the end of the project

period and is recording significant uplift in Scotland. An update will be provided at the next PMC meeting;

- Some partners under Strand 5 (Business to Business Partnerships) of the Research and Innovation objective are reluctant to engage in two years of activity due to Brexit concerns, which remains a live issue;
- JS and the SEUPB are continually working to support projects and mitigate potential risks posed by Brexit;
- Under the Environment Priority Axis, implementation of the CANN project is under way. An issue with landowners on Boleybrack Mountain, County Leitrim led to the project's withdrawal from the site. An action plan is in place, and the project is working to identify other suitable locations;
- Initial mapping in the CABB project has taken longer than expected however, the mapping process informs robust conservation action plans;
- The SWIM project team has installed equipment at two schools in Counties Sligo and Antrim, and recorded further engagement with pupils in side projects;
- Under the Environment: Transitional Waters objective, Phase 2 of the Swell project was approved by Steering Committee in December 2018. Permissions and procurement of the site has commenced, and an update will be provided at future PMCs;
- Under the Sustainable Transport Priority, the North West Multi Modal Hub is progressing well;
- Achieving full commitment under Priority Axis 4: Health and Social Care remains a priority. **The JS Director** thanked three existing projects under the theme for addressing initial challenges and achieving their 2018 Performance Framework targets;
- Six applications to the recent Population Health call are being assessed prior to a Steering Committee meeting in early autumn. A further four proposals are being considered under the common indicator outputs, and;
- A proposal was withdrawn under Disability Services. The JS is now working with existing partners under the strand to achieve the outputs.

The Chair thanked **the MA** and **JS Directors** and spoke of the global reach of INTERREG VA projects.

The Chair welcomed comments from Member States and the Committee.

The DPER representative thanked the SEUPB for the information presented and providing insight in the projects on the ground. The representative noted the Programme commitment level and prudent overcommitment, as well as the achievement of N+3 and Performance Framework targets.

The DPER representative noted the challenges faced under the Health Priority and the progress on implementation since.

Lastly, the DPER representative requested an update on the Electric Vehicles call, emphasising the increased momentum around the theme of climate change, and the level of car dependency in the three regions.

The DoF representative thanked the SEUPB for the presentations provided, and acknowledged the 97% commitment level and achievement of N+3. He outlined the Department's continued contribution to the Electric Vehicles call, and welcomed the Sustainable Transport evaluation presentation on the agenda.

The Scottish Government representative echoed comments on the papers and presentations, and the achievement of the Performance Framework targets.

The Scottish Government representative highlighted Scottish involvement in large INTERREG projects, and discussed Scotland's desire to continue to collaborate with Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland in post 2020 European funding.

The Scottish Government representative stated his disappointment that Scotland was not mentioned in the Sustainable Transport impact evaluation report, given the proposed connectivity between the 3 regions and Scotland's involvement in the Electric Vehicles proposals being submitted.

Lastly, **the Scottish Government representative** referred to the event taking place in Edinburgh in September 2019. He welcomed the opportunity to showcase the benefits of Scottish involvement in the Programmes and will share finalised details in due course.

The Chair discussed the benefits of Scottish involvement in the INTERREG Programmes and explained PEACE PLUS is reflective of the current Peace Programme partnering of Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland.

The Chair explained the inclusion of INTERREG activity in Peace Plus and the flexibility in the regulations for project partners and PMC advisors from outside the geographical region, to continue to support Programme activity.

The Chair also referred to the Annual INTERREG meeting in Bucharest the previous week, during which the Head of the EU Commission's DG Regio Unit was open to the UK's participation in future Programmes on a third country or transnational level.

The European Commission representative discussed the strategic focus on border regions in future Programmes and highlighted the options available for Scottish involvement as project partners or PMC advisors.

The European Commission representative confirmed the potential to include the UK as a third country in future Programmes was discussed during the Annual INTERREG meeting. The changes around maritime borders and how they will translate in the regulations and future Programmes depends on Brexit negotiations however, other options for Scottish involvement are available.

The Scottish Government representative thanked **the Chair** and **the EU Commission representative** for their response.

The JS Director reiterated the SEUPB's commitment to achieving the Electric Vehicle outputs, and assessment of the sole proposal received under the call is nearing completion. The JS Director also encouraged Members to engage with the SEUPB and project Twitter accounts and remain connected with their progress.

AP1: PMC to receive an update on additional funding to the Co-Innovate project.

AP2: PMC to receive update on SWELL project.

AP3: Final details of event taking place in Edinburgh in September 2019 to be shared with the SEUPB.

The Monitoring Committee;

- Noted the progress in implementation of the Programme.

7. Update on Performance Framework and;

8. Annual Implementation Report

The MA Director provided a presentation which detailed progress on achieving the mid-point milestones in the INTERREG VA Cooperation Programme at the end of 2018.

The EU Commission representative referred to inconsistencies between the financial amounts declared by the beneficiaries and those declared to the Commission, to be discussed further.

The MA Director attributed the “inconsistencies” to the possibility of timing issues in the Commission’s IT system, which does not reflect expenditure post January 2019. This will be discussed further with the EU Desk Officer.

Monitoring Committee Members made the following comments:

- Requested clarification around the term “percentage of claims paid” used in the implementation update paper and whether this acts as an indicator of claims processing issues;
- Queried the internal process between the rate of receipt of claims and the rate of payment;
- Queried where zero achievement appears against objectives, for example, under the Research and Innovation Priority, and;
- Expressed concern around project ability to manage changing conditions, particularly SMEs, and asked if risk analysis exists around external factors which could affect the submission of timely and accurate claims;
- Stated that a significant overachievement of outputs at this stage may indicate the outputs are not fit for purpose, and;
- Discussed challenges surrounding the removal of fossil fuels from the economy, which have emerged since the design of the Environment Priority Axis.

The MA Director, the Chair and the JS Director provided the following responses;

- Explained the Financial Control Unit’s (FCU) claim verification process;

- Clarified that the time between receipt of claims and rate of payment relates to the FCU seeking absent or appropriate information from the project;
- The Dashboard allows Senior Management to extract real-time data and identify any delays in claim submissions by individual project;
- An external consultant has been procured to identify innovative ways of delivering training around claim submission, therefore limiting errors;
- The JS closely monitor claim submission deadlines and claim targets on a quarterly basis. In the majority of cases, the project will have informed their JS Case Officer of any upcoming delays and the reason behind them, such as changes to phasing activity;
- The most significant emerging risk relates to Brexit and its effects on participation levels however, the JS actively work with projects to mitigate these risks;
- A number of the targets referred to are 2023 targets, against which achievement is not yet expected however, progress is being monitored;
- The Programme focus on outputs allows a degree of flexibility in measuring activity, and more thoughtful implementation practices. Following the provision of a robust rationale, projects are supported in making changes which will enable achievement of the outputs.
- If outputs were found to be not reflective of proposed activity or funding, the SEUPB may submit a request for a Programme modification to the EU Commission, and any overachievement of outputs must be disclosed in a rationale to the European Commission. This will be followed up;
- A number of targets in the meeting papers are interim targets, and some achievements are reflective of accelerated implementation in reaction to the results of the EU Referendum.

The Chair reiterated that an update against the Performance Framework will be a standing PMC agenda item going forward, and asked Members to provide comments on the Annual Implementation Report by 17th June 2019.

AP 4: Programme Monitoring Committee to forward comments on the Annual Implementation Report to the SEUPB by 17th June 2019.

The Monitoring Committee:

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

9. 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 NICVA representative queried any future plans to extend the stakeholder engagement strategy to include non- political organisations.

The Communications Manager confirmed the SEUPB attend numerous Community and Voluntary sector project events, and use the opportunity to lobby these organisations to promote the need for EU funding.

The NICVA representative offered NICVA's assistance in this regard.

The ICTU Ireland representative asked for further detail on which themes are receiving most media coverage.

The Communications Manager stated the majority of coverage is via weekly and daily newspapers and the Communications team have been working with projects to increase their coverage. Analysis of media coverage per Programme Objective has not been undertaken however, it will be considered for future breakdown.

The Chair informed Members that Irish Government Ministers are very supportive of project launches in the Border Region, and their attendance attracts coverage from local newspapers. **The Chair** discussed the merits of the engagement strategy in raising the profile of the Programme with politicians, particularly in Brussels.

The Monitoring Committee;

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

The Monitoring Committee were also provided with a short video on the Need to Talk project, with RNIB as a Lead Partner, before breaking for lunch.

10. Evaluation Plan update

The Chair introduced the Evaluation Plan update paper as provided in the meeting papers.

The ICTU Ireland representative asked whether the SEUPB is confident in the quality of the two delayed evaluations, and whether there are any concerns around the evaluator's capacity to complete the work.

The MA Director provided a response, detailing the reasons behind the delayed reports and resolution measures, including access to the eMS system and a forum to engage directly with projects through the JS. There are no concerns regarding their capacity. The PMC will receive an update on the evaluations in question at the next PMC meeting.

The Chair introduced **Dr James Cooper** and **Prof Austin Smith** of Transport Research Partners as the consultants appointed to conduct the Priority Axis 3: Sustainable Transport Impact Evaluation. **Dr Cooper** and **Prof Smith** provided a summary presentation on the Impact Evaluation and the resulting recommendations.

The ICTU Ireland representative asked the presenters whether the completed survey will provide a robust analysis of cross-border travel patterns. The representative also queried whether the survey will examine the border region in its entirety, or specific areas only.

Prof Austin Smith responded noting the budget constraints allowed for only a small subset of areas to be focused upon but agreed the approach could have wider applications.

Dr James Cooper informed Members that the surveys will change depending on the final arrangements for the Northern Ireland- Ireland border.

The CBI representative discussed the merits of existing Greenways and expressed his concern that detailed economic appraisal may not account for the social and cultural

reasons behind cross-border travel beyond commuting, and the benefits may be difficult to measure.

The Chair noted the representative's point and thanked the presenters. The presentation will be made available to the PMC following today's meeting.

AP 5: PMC to receive update on delayed impact evaluation reports and contracts

AP 6: PMC to receive presentation following meeting

The Monitoring Committee:

- Noted the progress that has made in implementing the Programme's Evaluation Plan.
- Noted the progress on the Implementation Evaluation Action Plan.

11. A.O.B.

No further business was declared.

12. Date of next meeting

The Chair stated the next meeting of the INTERREG VA Programme Monitoring Committee will take place in Belfast in November 2019.

13. Project Presentations

The Chair introduced **Dr Adam Mellor** of AFBI and **Alejandro Galego** of Marine Scotland Science, representing the COMPASS project, who provided a summary presentation of their project, which aims to implement a fully coherent network of buoys.

Following the COMPASS presentation **the Chair** introduced **Christina Riordian** of Clondalkin Behavioural Initiative/ Archways and **Rebecca Quelch** from Argyll and Bute Health and Social Care Partnership, presenting a summary presentation on behalf of the Changing Lives Initiative project.

The Chair thanked all project presenters and concluded the meeting.

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ANNEX I

ACTION POINTS/ISSUES OF CLARIFICATION

ARISING FROM MONITORING COMMITTEE

Thursday 30 May 2019, Radisson Blu Hotel, Edinburgh

ACTION POINTS

ACTION	TIMING	RESPONSIBILITY
1. PMC to receive an update on additional funding to the Co-innovate project	At next PMC meeting, November 2019	JS
2. PMC to receive update on SWELL project	At next PMC meeting, November 2019	JS
3. Details of event taking place in Edinburgh in September 2019 to be forwarded to the SEUPB	ASAP	Scottish Government
4. PMC Members to forward comments on AIR	Prior to 17 June deadline	INTERREG PMC
5. PMC to receive update on delayed impact evaluation reports and contracts	At next PMC meeting, November 2019	MA
6. PMC to receive presentation following meeting	ASAP	MA

ANNEX II

Attendance – INTERREG VA Programme Monitoring Committee – Thursday 30th May 2019, Radisson Blu Hotel, Edinburgh

Chair

Gina McIntyre Chief Executive Officer, SEUPB

Members

Linda Aird	North Ayrshire Council
Cllr Alex Baird	NILGA/ UUP
Donna Brodie	Scottish Environmental Protection Agency
Anne Marie Caulfield	DPER
Ivan Cooper	The Wheel
Sean Cronin	Environmental Pillar
Dr Maura Farrell	Irish Rural Link
Mark Feeney	MA Director, SEUPB
Blair Horan	Irish Congress of Trade Unions, Ireland
Gillian MacDonald	Scottish Natural Heritage
Ruth MacDonald	Scottish Government
Leanne Massey	SEUPB
John Maxwell	Scottish Government
Brian McCann	CBI

Dominic McCullough	Department of Finance NI (DoF)
Nicola Mellis	Scottish Government
Ken Nelson	Intertrade Ireland
Geoff Nuttall	NICVA
Paul Sheridan	Corporate Services Director, SEUPB
Linda Stewart	Scotland Europa
Marianne Van De Vorle	EU Commission

Advisors

Susan Bardon	Department of Jobs, Enterprise & Innovation (DJEI)
Catherine Clynes	DPER
Caroline Coleman	National Contact Point, Scotland (SEUPB)
Elaine Colgan	Department of Health
Wendy Cooke	DAERA
Dave Loyal	Department for the Economy
Owen Lyttle	DAERA
John McCandless	Communications, SEUPB
Philip McMurray	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)
Michael Power	NISRA
Mark Stranaghan	Department for Infrastructure
Jim Sutherland	Department for Infrastructure

Observers

Wendy Cooke	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)
Richard Duff	Department of Finance
Dr Alejandro Gallego	Marine Scotland Science
Francesca Giannini	Scotland Europa/ Scottish Enterprise
Mark Hannify	Consulate General of Ireland in Scotland
Jim Millard	Scottish Government
Emer McGeough	NSMC
Natalia Popielska	SEUPB intern
Lisa Singh	Scottish Government Innovation Team

Presenters

Dr James Cooper	Transport Research Partners
Prof. Austin Smyth	Transport Research Partners
Christina Riordian	Changing Lives Initiative
Adam Mellor	AFBI / COMPASS
Rebecca Quelch	Changing Lives Initiative/ Argyll & Bute HSPPC

Secretariat (SEUPB)

Tara McCormick	Managing Authority (minutes)
Thomas McGarvey	Managing Authority

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

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