



## Ireland Wales Programme 2014-2020

**Programme Monitoring Committee – Meeting 2**  
**Thursday July 23rd 2015 10:00**  
**National Botanic Garden, Carmarthen, Wales**

### Agenda

	<i>Item</i>	<i>Papers</i>
1	10:00 Welcome - Opening and Introduction.	
2	10:05 Opening Remarks - Director of the National Botanic Garden, Rosie Plummer	
3	10:15 Minutes of the previous PMC Meeting – April 30 <sup>th</sup> Dublin	<i>IWPMC1420 (02) 01</i>
4	10:30 Programme Update Report – Linda Weaver, Head of Ireland Wales Joint Secretariat	<i>IWPMC1420 (02) 02</i> <i>Annex 1</i> <i>Annex 2</i>
5	10:45 Video Presentation – Ireland Wales Programme Projects 2007-2013	
	<i>11:00 – 11:15: Break – tea, coffee &amp; bara brith</i>	
6	11:15 Presentation by the Ireland Wales Operations Officers	
7	11:35 Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy and Indicator Definition Report – Gavin Lewis, WEFO	<i>IWPMC1420 (02) 03</i> <i>Annex 1</i>
8	12:00 Communications Strategy and Media Report – Alison Sandford, WEFO	<b>Paper to follow:</b> <i>IWPMC1420 (02) 04</i>
9	12:15 Dates of future meetings	

10	12:20 Any Other Business	
11	12:30 Project presentations from ACT and Hydro BPT	
	13:00 <i>Lunch</i>	



## **Ireland Wales Programme 2014-2020**

### **Programme Monitoring Committee – Meeting 2**

National Botanic Garden of Wales, Carmarthen

Thursday 23 July 2015

Attendance is shown at Annex 1.

#### **Agenda Item 1: Welcome and Opening remarks**

1. The Chair welcomed members to the second PMC meeting of the 2014-2020 Ireland Wales Programme as well as to the National Botanic Garden. The Chair outlined the main aims of the meeting – to discuss the first draft of a Programme Monitoring & Evaluation Strategy and the Programme Communications Strategy. As required by the Regulations, the Monitoring Committee has to examine and approve the Communications Strategy within 6 months of the approval of the Programme (by 12<sup>th</sup> of August) prior to submitting it to the Commission and the Evaluation plan has to be approved by the Monitoring Committee within 12 months of the approval of the Programme. The Southern Regional Assembly thanked the Chair for the hospitality shown to all members at the welcoming evening meal.

2. The local WLGA member also welcomed members to Carmarthen and to the National Botanic Garden, highlighting the importance of EU funds in regenerating the local area.

#### **Agenda Item 2: Welcome from the Director of the National Botanic Garden**

3. Rosie Plummer, Director of the National Botanic Garden, welcomed members with a brief history and information about the Garden, including details of the European funding which allowed the Garden to be created.

#### **Agenda Item 3: Minutes of the previous PMC meeting – April 30, Dublin**

4. The Managing Authority (MA) took members through the action points, with further detail provided on the following in relation to the 2007-2013 Programme:

- *2007-2013 Annual Implementation Report (AIR)*: The AIR was circulated to members by written procedure and submitted to the Commission by the 30 June deadline, with no objections. It is expected that comments from the Commission will be sent within the next fortnight.

5. Progress against the 2014-2020 action points below were noted by the PMC with no further comment and the minutes were accepted as a true record of the meeting.

- *Background to the IW Programme*: a DVD highlighting activity under the programme would be shown as requested at the Dublin PMC;
- *Options for project presentations at PMC*: the JS had reflected on this and invited two projects to present at the PMC – ACT and Hydro BPT;
- *Rules of Procedure*: minor amendments had been taken on board and circulated to the PMC – these were now approved;
- *Register of Interests*: following discussion at the WEFO/SRA/DPER meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> July, the document was made available at the PMC meeting – an e-version would be circulated for completeness post-meeting;
- *Selection Criteria*: minor revisions had been made to reflect comments from the PMC. These were now approved;
- *Future PMC meetings*: the Managing Authority would pick up as part of the agenda.

#### **Agenda Item 4: Programme Update Report**

6. The Head of the Joint Secretariat (JS) provided members with a paper outlining activity and details of pipeline proposals, along with the Terms of Reference for the Technical Group (TG), an update of indicative financial indicators and an update on plans for the Programme Steering Committee (PSC). The JS also updated members on activity since the last PMC meeting:

- Engaging stakeholders has been the priority, with a lot of interest being generated on both sides of the water. Proposals for operations were actively being worked up;
- Guidance for stakeholders has been drafted and added to WEFO and SRA websites;
- Arrangements have been made for the constitution of the PSC;
- The TG has met twice, most recently on 22<sup>nd</sup> July with four proposals now through to business planning. The next TG was scheduled for late September/October in Waterford;
- There has been strong interest across all Priorities;
- The first PSC meeting will be held in North Wales on 24 September;

- For now the level of information only covered headline issues. Once programme implementation has accelerated, the PMC would be provided with more detailed financial and monitoring information regarding progress against expenditure targets (N+3), commitment and spend by Priority and progress against indicators.

#### 7. Matters raised by members included:

- *Operations*: the MA confirmed that the indicative financial amounts afforded to projects in the paper were literally just that, no money had been committed. Full scrutiny of project finance would be picked up at the business planning stage.
- *Management of the budget with an open call process*: the Chair and MA confirmed that both the PSC (in considering projects) and the PMC had important roles in managing programme finances and the spread of the budget across the Priorities; the PMC would also monitor the project pipeline. Interest was healthy across all three Priorities and this was important. The need to balance expenditure across the programme time frame was also an important function and this process will evolve over time. Project interest in some areas may need to be stimulated or intervention rates may need to be changed but these are still very early days – the emphasis at this juncture and in moving forward had to be on developing quality projects.
- *Role of HE/FE & engagement of the private sector*: There were observations that the early pipeline PA 1 projects were very much focused on the HE sector. The JS noted this but confirmed the PA focus as sharing knowledge with SMEs and engaging with the private sector. The 2014-2020 Programme is not business as usual – all operations will need to add value and the emphasis is on results on the ground, not purely research. The MA wasn't surprised at interest from the HE sector given the existence of world class universities in the Programme area and the prominence of established partnerships, but this was very early on in the process; there were three Priorities and the MA re-iterated intentions when drafting the CP to ensure a balance between smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and to aim for a balance of partners across the Priorities.
- *SMEs*: This will be the first time that SMEs can be a full project partner. On this matter, the Commission stressed the need to communicate opportunities offered by the new environment and referred to online guidance by INTERACT which could also be used to involve and attract SMEs. The importance of leveraging in private sector investment was recognised, however the PMC also registered remaining complexities surrounding the direct engagement of SMEs.
- *Simplified Costs*: the 2014-2020 Programme will use a system of simplified costs – the JS will work individually with stakeholders on a case by case basis to meet their different needs. It was also noted that Simplified Costs Guidance is available on the WEFO/SRA websites.
- *Integration with other EU funds within projects*: The MA and SRA recognised the importance of integration and holistic thinking across funds, but felt that this

would be more effectively considered at the programme level. As stated in the CP, the programme will look to align its operations with those in regional and other ETC programmes where relevant. Operations would also be encouraged to look beyond project and programme timelines as to what their outputs will achieve, and the potential for linking with other programmes. The MA drew attention to some evidence of this already happening – for example the link between SEE Design (policy funded by INTERREG IVC) and SPIDER (operational take-up funded by North-West Europe).

**Action:** MA to investigate ways of providing guidance specifically targeted at SMEs.

### **Agenda Item 5: Video Presentation: 2007-2013 projects**

8. Members were shown a short video presentation which was put together by the WEFO Communications Unit with assistance from SRA. The video showcased a selection of successful projects from the 2007-2013 programme period and also highlighted the 2014-2020 programme launch.

### **Agenda Item 6: Presentation by the Ireland Wales Operations Officers**

9 .The Operations Officers present at the meeting gave an oral presentation on their role and the journey from promoting and marketing the programme product and brand, the early idea, pre-planning, business development, through to the post-approval stage and closure.

10 .Matters raised by members included:

- *Numbers of pipeline applications:* The number of potential operations is very buoyant and interest is high, even at this early stage.
- *Early discussions:* Upfront, honest discussions have taken place with an emphasis on managing levels of expectation and signposting to other EU funds where more relevant.
- *Intended process to measure outputs/indicators:* PPIMS (WEFO's Programme and Project Information Management System) will automatically check for variations in data, and verifying proof of outputs will be part of the first level control process. It will be key to monitor and scrutinise the relationship between the outputs driven by the projects and results orientation, The JS will also be supported by key specialist teams in WEFO throughout the process.
- *Regional strategies:* As well as government priorities, engagement with regional strategies in assessing potential operations was also a marker for the Operations Officers.

## Agenda Item 7: Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy

11. Members of WEFO's Research, Monitoring and Evaluation (RME) Unit presented the draft Monitoring & Evaluation Strategy which needs to be approved by the Monitoring Committee within 12 months of the programme's approval – by 12 February 2016.

12. The RME Unit highlighted that while evaluation work is long term, the PMC would be updated throughout the course of the year through Programme Monitoring Reports. The M&E strategy is a first draft which was still the subject of discussion between WEFO/SRA/DPER. The Chair stressed the need for the Programme to ensure that the PMC received sufficient information for it to discharge its functions and suggested the submission of an annual evaluation plan to the PMC. This was the first chance for the PMC to discuss the paper and comments were invited.

13. Matters raised by members included:

- *Timing – evaluation of operations approved early:* The timescales set out in the Strategy are based at the programme level – evaluation at an operational level will be done by the operations themselves.
- *Focus on impact rather than outputs:* The high-level result indicators are there to capture impact, with targeted improvement against a baseline – all baselines will be set before the end of 2015.
- *'Jobs created within 12 months' output:* This is based on a core indicator set by DG Regio and used by all programmes. The intention is to capture job creation as a direct result of the project. Data can also be captured from 2-3 years afterwards for use in evaluation as the programme's impact should not be under-sold. Monitoring and evaluation is key to show the impact and ensure the direction taken by the programme is correct.
- *Contribution to the Atlantic Strategy:* The MA confirmed that alignment with the Atlantic Strategy would be taken into account as set out in the CP and as referenced in the selection criteria, but stressed that the Strategy itself would not drive the programme.
- *Evaluation of wider communities, public sector, as well as business:* Surveys will be aimed at the general public and stakeholders as well as business – this will be done on a cross-border level. The detail of how this will be implemented is to be discussed.
- *Impact and evaluation of cross-border element:* This element should be demonstrated and proved at the outset, with the overall impact of collaboration to form part of the end evaluation. On this point, the MA stressed that each member of the JS team was fully tuned in to the importance of cross-border added value – the first question for any operation was why cross-border? The

importance of cross-border added value had already been fully understood by PMC members.

**Action:** WEFO RME to create a mock-up of the evaluation plan document, to include consideration of data / visuals / traffic light system and present it at the next PMC meeting.

## **Agenda Item 8: Communications Strategy**

14. WEFO's Communication Unit presented the draft Communications Strategy which needs to be approved by the Monitoring Committee and submitted to the Commission within 6 months of the programme's approval – 12 August 2015. The draft had been worked on jointly with colleagues in SRA.

15. The Communications Unit highlighted that this was to be an evolving document, with the aim of: simplifying the message of what the Ireland Wales Programme seeks to achieve; focussing on promoting the opportunities and benefits of the programme through human interest case studies and successes; the integration of key messages with other EU funding; maximising the use of digital and social media channels; and that the MA and JS and all PMC members and beneficiaries have a shared responsibility to communicate the opportunities, progress and successes of the programme.

16. Matters raised by members included:

- *Non-compliance with the Strategy:* The effective displaying of, for example, billboards and plaques is important and any issues should be picked up during inspection. This was acknowledged and it was confirmed that the JS will work with sponsors from an early stage of project development and delivery so that publicity requirements are addressed.
- *Proportionality and scale:* The Strategy followed a communications framework for the regional programmes and as such, there were comments that it was ambitious given the scale of the Ireland/Wales programme. This was noted, however WEFO considered it deliverable with possibilities existing to integrate Ireland Wales Programme messages into other regional programme and wider EU funds communication. The Strategy would evolve and delivery would be monitored.
- *Annual event:* Going forward it will be important to look at other ways of communicating the programme's success annually, for example through twitter campaigns which engage with sponsors and increase participation, and can reach a large audience without the need for extensive financial resources. The recent 'Europe Day' social media campaign held by WEFO was provided as an example, which could be built on for the Ireland Wales annual information event.



- *How the PMC members will help to promote the programme:* Members can ensure that if separate meetings take place with organisations with a potential interest in the programme, that Ireland Wales materials are provided. JS presence could also be considered.
- *Communications budget:* The MA responded to comments about the limited scale of the budget – some 0.3% of the overall programme. The MA felt that smaller programmes were severely restricted by the 6% ceiling cemented in the Regulations which disadvantaged smaller cross-border programmes. The Technical Assistance budget which had to take account of JS operating costs was therefore significantly stretched. The MA further pointed out that WEFO would be putting in additional HR resource from outside the Programme Communications budget to assist the Programme.
- *Challenge of cross-border social & digital media:* The MA are currently thinking creatively in house of how to build on the programme's social media profile and maximise its impact.

The PMC agreed the Communications Strategy in principle.

**Action:** *Any further comments from members on the draft Strategy should be submitted to the JS by Thursday 6 August. The Strategy will then be considered as formally approved by all members and submitted to the Commission by Wednesday 12 August.*

**Action:** *The JS will circulate a table of any final comments and amendments received, and a copy of the submitted Strategy to all members for information.*

### **Agenda Item 9: Dates of future meetings**

17.The PMC agreed the MA proposal to convene meetings on the following dates.

- Thursday 26 November 2015: Dublin, Ireland
- Thursday 21 April 2016: North Wales – *location to be confirmed*
- Thursday 22 September 2016: Ireland – *location to be confirmed*

### **Agenda Item 10: Any Other Business**

18.All members will need to complete the Register of Interests and return to the JS.

**Action:** *JS to send the Register of Interests electronically to members.*

### **Agenda Item 11: Project presentations**

19. The PMC heard presentations from representatives of two successful projects from the 2007-2013 Programme – ACT and Hydro BPT. The value of different perspectives in driving the projects was highlighted, as well as the importance of capturing and disseminating the lessons learnt on a cross-border basis as a result of the collaboration.

20. The partners from both projects have aspirations to bring forward project proposals to the new 2014-2020 Ireland Wales Programme and also for integrating with other EU funds programmes, such as Horizon 2020.

21. The PMC noted the cross-border added value of both projects and thanked the presenters for providing valuable insight into activity supported by the Programme.

22. Prior to closure, the Chair thanked members and officials for their contributions to the meeting. The Chair also noted the impending departure of Cathal Reilly who was thanked for his efforts on first level control in SRA and as acting Head of Unit of the 2007-2013 programme in Waterford.