



Ireland Wales Programme 2014-2020

Programme Monitoring Committee - Meeting 6
 Tuesday 9th May 2017 10.30a.m
 Rivercourt Hotel, Kilkenny, Ireland

		Papers
	10:15 – 10:30 Tea and Coffee on arrival	
1	10:30 – 10:45 Welcome, Opening and Introduction - Stephen Blair Chair and Joint Chair Damien O'Brien	
2	10:45 – 10:55 Minutes of PMC Meeting 5 including action points – November 24th 2016 Cork – Stephen Blair	IWPMC1420(06)01
3	10:55 – 11:10 EU Transition – Damien O'Brien	Oral
4	11:10 – 11:20 Programme update - Managing Authority – Mike Pollard	Oral
5	11:20 - 11:30 Programme Update and Development Report - Joint Secretariat – Linda Weaver/Operations Officers	IWPMC1420(06)02
6	11:30 – 11:45 Communication Update – Jane McMillan / Mike Pollard	IWPMC1420(06)03
7	11:45 – 12:00 Monitoring and Evaluation – Annual Implementation Report Update	IWPMC1420(06)04
	12:00 – 13:00 Lunch	
8	13:00 – 14:00 pISCES – approved project	Presentation from project partners

9	14:00- 14:15 Any Other Business/Date of next meeting	
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IRELAND WALES
2007 – 2013



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		Papers
1	14:15 – 14:30 2007-2013 Final Implementation Report (including position on closure)	PMC 17 01
2	14:30 Any Other Business	

Joint Secretariat – May 2017



Ireland Wales Programme 2014-2020
Programme Monitoring Committee – Meeting 6
The Rivercourt Hotel, Kilkenny, Ireland
9th May 2017
Minutes

A list of attendees is shown at Annex 1.
A list of apologies is shown at Annex 2.

Agenda Item 1 – Welcome – Opening and Introductions

1. The Chair, Stephen Blair (SB), welcomed members to Kilkenny and the sixth PMC of the 2014-2020 Ireland Wales Programme. The Chair noted the number of new members around the table and requested that all attendees introduce themselves.
2. SB welcomed Damien O'Brien (DO'B) to Co-Chair the meeting noting his pending departure from The Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO). SB welcomed the new EU Desk Officer, Marianne Van De Vorle to her first PMC meeting.
3. DO'B made a few introductory comments. He thanked SB and his colleagues for their hospitality on the evening before the meeting. DO'B thanked Welsh members for making the journey noting that a large number were deputising for colleagues. DO'B introduced his successor Sioned Evans (SE) confirming that she would be taking over as CEO of WEFO in a few weeks time. DO'B recorded his thanks for Patricia Hennessey's contribution and her loyal and strong friendship during her time on the programme. DO'B welcomed Patricia's successor Michael McGrath to the programme.
4. It was appropriate that Irish and Welsh delegations were here on Europe Day. The PMC was advised that Aberystwyth University had organised an event showcasing the four approved operations they have links with, namely CHERISH, Acclimatize, ECOStructure and BLUEFISH. DO'B welcomed the recent television coverage by the BBC of the CHERISH operation.
5. SB noted that due to the large number of apologies for today's meeting, they would be recorded within the minutes. Annex 2 refers.

Agenda Item 2 – Minutes of PMC Meeting 5 including action points – November 24th 2016 Cork

6. The PMC minutes from Cork in November 2016 were accepted as a true account of the meeting. There were no specific action points from Cork.

Agenda Item 3 EU Transition Update

7. SB introduced the subject as one which has been topical for both Nations and one which the PMC needed to be mindful of as we roll out and fully implement this current programme. SB invited DO'B to talk further on behalf of the Welsh Government and Gearoid O'Keeffe (GOK) to comment on the Irish Government's perspective.
8. DO'B referred to the forthcoming UK General Election. For the Welsh Government it was to a large extent 'business as usual, however officials as civil servants had to be mindful about the content of any discussions taking place.
9. Things had developed since Des Clifford, the Principal Private Secretary for the First Minister of Wales had provided the Cork PMC with an update. DO'B emphasised that the Ireland Wales Programme remained fully open for business and the Programme management partners were determined to make it a success. DO'B explained that following the triggering of Article 50, it was WEFO's ambition to commit the entirety of the programme funding by the end of 2018 to ensure compliance with the UK Treasury's full lifetime guarantee for all ESIF projects approved before the UK leaves the EU. This Guarantee included co-operation programmes and therefore Ireland Wales.
10. Ireland Wales was in a good position with a strong pipeline of operations in Priority Axis 1 and 2 and the pending Priority Axis 3 call expected to support the Programme's ambition to commit by the aforementioned deadline. As long as funding was committed, DO'B stated that it would be secure up to 2023. DO'B noted that there is a lot of useful information contained within the Irish Government's Brexit website which he found informative. January 2017 saw the Welsh Government publish a White Paper - 'Securing Wales' Future' which was developed jointly with Plaid Cymru, the leading opposition party. Both parties had campaigned for "remain" but respectful of the peoples' vote, the Welsh Government had focused on securing the best deal for Wales. Challenging negotiations lay ahead, however the White Paper set out a comprehensive and credible plan for ensuring Wales's priorities remained centre stage. The main

priority was to ensure Wales retains access to the single market given that 67% of Welsh exports go to that market (particularly agriculture and food) and secondly the retention of the current levels of finance to Wales as a net beneficiary of EU funds - £680million p.a. and £370million p.a. from the ESIF. Wales had been informed it would not lose a penny and the Welsh Government intended to hold the UK Government to account on this.

11. Another strong theme was to push for sensible transitional arrangements, with the objective to avoid any cliff edge option to include completion of the 2014-2020 programmes. Some progress was being made, with the UK Government now talking about a possible transitional implementation phase. The UK General election outcome was likely to influence direction in this space.
12. DO'B reassured members that Welsh Government aims to keep Wales as an open and internationally engaged country and stressed its desire to maintain access to joint working and strengthening the relationship between both nations after the UK has left the EU; deepening the relationship was an ambition shared by both Governments and this message had been re-enforced at Ministerial level. Lifting a quote from the White Paper DO'B referred to Wales having "... a particularly close co-operation with the Irish Republic, our maritime neighbour, through the European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) Programmes and we wish to maintain access to this joint working after the UK has left the EU. When the UK leaves the EU this form of co-operation will become, if anything, even more important and, in particular, we are committed to strengthening the relationship between Wales and Ireland."
13. The Welsh Government was likely to publish a number of documents in the future including one regarding regional economic policy. A strong theme was likely to be encouragement and support for collaboration across regional boundaries between Wales and the UK, Wales and Ireland and internationally. Further discussions will be held with PMC members in the future once a paper had been produced.
14. GO'K referred to an Irish Government position paper on Brexit setting out its priorities for negotiating with the Commission which was published last week on the aforementioned website. Ireland Wales was one of three cross-border programmes with the UK worth a total of €650m and the Irish Government had been clear from day 1 about its commitment to continuation of these programmes which had seen over 20 years of valuable co-operation. Welsh and Irish Ministers had met in October 2016 and both Governments were looking to a successor post-2020 programme and continued co-operation between both countries. GO'K stated that the

Irish Government had ensured the insertion of a safeguard clause in project funding agreements to provide programme beneficiaries with confidence and a degree of certainty to invest in Ireland Wales across its timeframe.

15. GO’K referred to the Irish Government’s three phased approach in this context:-

- i. Short term – primary objective to secure funding certainty for the lifetime of the 2014-2020 programmes;
- ii. Medium term – objective to see the ETC programmes successfully implemented up to the end of the programme period including achieving N+3 expenditure targets, and
- iii. Long term – bending minds to shaping successor ETC programmes post 2020.

16. GO’K stressed the importance of successful implementation, specifically continuing financial commitment levels at pace and as the programme approaches its midway point, that funds are being drawn down and spent regardless of the implications of Brexit.

17. Marianne Van De Vorle (MV) supported the business as usual approach but was unable to comment further regarding the departure of the UK from the EU and the pending negotiations.

18. Queries were raised about the practical application of the flow of funding to beneficiaries given the timeline determined by the UK Treasury Guarantee. GO’K recognised the issue which would be dependant on how the UK would continue to contribute to the multi-annual framework – the UK element of the funding was guaranteed but the mechanisms for how funding would flow could not be determined at this juncture.

19. GO’K viewed the contract safeguard clause as a lever to review the details of how funding mechanisms will work. GO’K noted that as discussions moved forward regarding the UK’s pending departure from the EU the mix of funding will form part of these discussions. The important point was that the funding and commitment is there and the modalities of releasing funds to the beneficiary are details that will need to be considered further. GO’K stressed the importance of the transitional arrangements and anticipated that many of the solutions could be ironed out in this phase.

20. DO’B confirmed the MA’s ambition was to maximise confidence levels within projects during the EU Transition period. The MA aim was to ensure that payments will be made as usual to the beneficiaries with the intention of making transition as smooth as possible. It would be for

Governments to work out the modality and blend of payments. The MA was working on the assumption that there will be as little disruption to beneficiaries as possible. It was noted that private beneficiaries may require additional assurance given potential cash flow capacity issues.

21. Answering a query suggesting a need to adapt the Programme and its indicators to respond to Brexit and its impact on businesses and supply chains, the Chair, referred to the multi-annual nature of the Programme and the mid term review to assess the impact of the programme. However, in reality, the opportunity to do things differently to reflect the new realities would be limited given that most of the funding will have been committed at this juncture.
22. DO'B stressed the need to be realistic when determining what the programme can actually achieve given the limited size of its budget. A number of operations will assist the programme more strategically in terms of addressing the fallout from the UK leaving the EU. A recent visit to CALIN had underlined how this anchor project was set to boost trade and business links between Ireland and Wales and there were no doubt other projects that could address the imperative of maintaining strong economic ties.
23. GO'K said that Brexit aside, this type of issue was one which applied across Europe as change occurs in that these types of multi-annual programmes had limited capacity to adapt, the migration crisis being a case in point. He felt that this was part of a much wider Cohesion policy debate, in that it should be made easier for programmes to respond when they needed to.

Agenda Item 4 - Programme Update – Management Authority

24. Mike Pollard (MP) provided a brief MA update. On a technical note, a written procedure had been launched on 23rd March to secure incorporation of the remaining result indicators for PA1 and PA2. Following PMC agreement to changes to the Programme document, a modification was submitted to the Commission in accordance with Regulations. The MA is awaiting a response from the European Commission.
25. MP updated the PMC on the second PSC meeting which had taken place in Dublin in February. The meeting had helped develop face-to-face relationships to support the PSC work conducted through the on-line Portal. Whilst the Portal had been designed to facilitate an effective means of virtual decision making, MP reflected on the importance of continuing

face to face meetings where they could be organised.

26. MP drew the PMC's attention to the Commission's Annual 2017 ETC Meeting supported by the Maltese Presidency and held at the end of April. He had joined Managing Authorities from all ETC programmes to share views on ETC policy and delivery with the Commission and with other Programme managers, including a review of models of engagement with the view to considering how things can be done differently and more effectively in the future. The interactive workshops focusing on issues including results orientation had been most useful in this context. There was also discussion around early options for structures beyond 2020, MP encouraged those members that had not had the opportunity to tune in to the plenary sessions to do so, noting they were available on the Regio website.

27. MVVD re-affirmed MP's view that the Interreg Annual Meeting was a very useful one and valued MP's feedback about the interactive workshops.

28. **ACTION POINT 09.05.2017/1:** MVDV to come back with a forecast timescale for a decision regarding the programme modification.

Agenda Item 5 Programme Update and Development Report

29. Linda Weaver (LW), Head of the Joint Secretariat (JS) introduced the Programme Update Report which summarised the position with implementation since the fifth PMC meeting in November 2016. It included a progress report on those joint operations in the appraisal system, an overview of grant commitment levels, and initial information on forecast outputs for those operations in the system. The N+3 expenditure targets were highlighted at paragraphs 23 and 24 for information noting that the first target will be end 2018. The Head of the JS reviewed the key points.

30. The progress of each Priority Axis (PA) was summarised. Nine operations had now been formally approved in PA1 and PA2 and one in PA4. Three business plans had been considered by the PSC since the PMC last met. Section 6 headlines the financial commitment position of the programme, Table 1 provides a complete financial picture of business in the system.

1. PA1 – projects with an indicative ERDF value of €29m in the system which is close to the PA allocation of €31.7m;
2. PA2 – projects with an indicative ERDF value of €28m slightly over the PA allocation of €27.7m , however it

was noted that not all of the projects had been subjected to the detailed assessment process and therefore this was subject to change.

3. PA3 – while no projects have been approved there is a project in business planning to the value of €5.4m ERDF.
4. PA4 – one TA project approved totalling €4.6m.

31. The PMC was informed that there were also early stage pipeline proposals that were not yet recorded at the pre-planning stage and therefore had not been taken into account at table 1.

32. The PMC was informed that the More Than a Club PA 1 proposal was considered by the PSC in February however due to a technical issue a final decision was not taken at the time. The technical issue has now been resolved and the JS will upload the information onto the Portal for PSC members to give their final decision in the next few weeks.

33. The JS was content with the headline financial commitments for PA 1 and PA 2 and there were now some PA 3 operations in the pipeline together with some early stage enquiries particularly in Wales. Annexes to the paper provided details of progress by PA, however details of the indicator targets should be treated with some caution as those operations currently being assessed had not had their costs challenged through the JS assessment process. As far as forecasts were concerned, these would be updated as more projects are approved and progress through the appraisal system.

34. A call for PA3 was soon to open to accelerate engagement and re-energise interest in the programme with a view to commit the indicative amount of €10million remaining in the PA. The call was expected to open on 15th May and close 28th July; guidance would be made available on the Programme website.

35. Responding to a query regarding the balance of funding with PA1 close to being fully committed in comparison to PA3, and whether there were currently any plans to change funding allocations between PA's, MP confirmed that the MA currently had no intention of recommending a rebalance of the financial allocations as it remained confident longer term that PA3 would be fully committed. The position would be reviewed post-call deadline however the MA anticipated a positive reaction to the call, recognising that projects had been developing at a slower pace than in other PA's for reasons already documented, every opportunity would be taken to publicise opportunities under PA 3 to beneficiaries during the

three month window, including hosting a specific workshop in Ireland which had been confirmed by DK in the SRA.

36. LW reassured members that there were a number of early stage proposals in the system for PA1 and it was deemed good practice to have some in reserve for all PA's as inevitably some project underspend would arise and it was important to have some flexibility to re-direct resources as quickly as possible elsewhere should the need arise.
37. Jane McMillan (JM), for the MA, explained that the JS would take a balanced approach when developing business plans when a PA is close to being fully committed. Proposals would remain in the pre-planning stage in readiness should funds become available. Any beneficiaries in this position would be made fully aware of the situation.
38. Responding to a query about reinvigorating interest in PA 3, LW confirmed that the JS would support the call with sufficient guidance and documentation available on the programme website and would also be contacting individual stakeholders who had recently shown an interest in this PA to notify them that the call was open. The JS would also be participating in a webinar run by the Welsh Council of Voluntary Action (WCVA).
39. MVDV confirmed that it would not be easy to make programme modifications to change programme funds from one PA to another, and was in agreement with the proposal of holding an event to raise awareness of the call.
40. Responding to points on timelines and perceived obstacles to the development of business plans being submitted for PA3, LW reiterated that the PA3 call would close at the end of July after which the JS would review each proposal with decisions being issued towards the end of September or early October.
41. Breda Curran (BC) for the Ireland Wales Operations Officers (IWOO's) felt that the limited number of proposals coming forward to date was due to an extent to a perception in some quarters that the process was 'onerous' and that some third sector organisations were lacking sufficient confidence and resources to deal with the necessary requirements.
42. MP, for the MA, noted that some third sector organisations might find the process challenging, however procedures had been agreed at the programme outset. Support was available and it was the role of all parties, in particular the IWOO's to help organisations through the process,

including those in the third sector with overcoming any potential barriers to engagement. MP stressed that this PA was not exclusive to the third sector, it also sought to attract local authorities and tourism organisations. This was noted by the PMC and members working within these sectors agreed to cascade this message back to support the call. JM confirmed that this message would be made clear in the call documentation.

43. Noting the more strategic orientation of this programme, LW stressed that it was fully open to third sector organisations. One possible approach was to consider opportunities to link third sector parties with larger organisations in other sectors to work as part of larger umbrella proposals. The JS was working with WHEEL and the WCVA to ensure that necessary support is provided in order that proposals can be submitted.

44. Responding to a query about the absence of a specific employment indicator in PA 2, it was explained that the primary purpose of the PA was to support joint adaptation measures and to raise awareness of climate change. The Programme had been developed on the basis that employment targets would primarily be addressed through innovation measures in PA 1.

45. **Action Point 09.05.2017/2** LW to circulate details of the PA 3 Call to Members to promote it to their stakeholders.

Agenda Item 6 Communication Update

46. JM, for the MA, updated the PMC following discussions in Cork where it had been agreed to keep the strategy under review.

47. Key points from the paper were highlighted. JM re-iterated the need to ensure the flow of information to stakeholders and the general public. She referred to a recent twitter campaign led by the MA during the week commencing 6th March targeting higher and further education, local authorities and other stakeholders. This was part of an exercise to continue to raise the profile of the programme and in response to discussions in Cork. The MA continued to publicise the approval of projects on the programme website which continued to attract interest. In addition projects themselves were receiving positive publicity, for example the CHERISH project had been the subject of some interest from the BBC. Since the PMC in Cork the number of approvals has increased. As the Programme gathered momentum, the MA and JS would have more opportunities to publicise the programme through approval announcements and launches which in turn should optimise website hits

and twitter activity.

48. The PA3 call was aimed at reinvigorating interest in the programme and continuing to promote the message that it was still fully open for business. Post-call the MA/JS would take stock of communications activity.

49. DK informed the Committee that Prince Charles was due to visit Kilkenny in the week of the PMC and in conjunction with the MA, SRA were looking to use the visit as an opportunity to promote the programme. The intention was for one of the IWOO's to take a slot on local radio.

50. GO'K stressed the importance of disseminating the positive messages at every opportunity given the situation with Brexit, re-iterating the positive impact that the programme has on communities and people. There was a need across the EU to make spending on policy more relevant to citizens.

51. The PMC noted the position with communications.

51. Action Point 09.05.2017/3 DK to inform PMC members about the event in Ireland to publicise the PA3 call.

Agenda Item 7 – Monitoring and Evaluation – Annual Implementation Report Update

52. MP, for the MA, covered the salient points.

53. The MA was required each year to submit an Annual Implementation Report (AIR). The 2016 report was due for submission to the Commission by the end of June prior to which, to comply with the Regulations, its content had to be approved by the PMC.

54. Given the timing of this meeting and the fact that the draft AIR was not yet in place, the PMC agreed to consider the AIR by written procedure. MP confirmed the MA intention to circulate the draft AIR by the 9th June, with PMC comments required by 23rd June. Any comments would be addressed by the MA in conjunction with programme partners in Ireland with the intention of submitting the final report to the Commission by the 30th June.

55. The position was noted.

Agenda Item 8 pISCES – approved project presentation

56. The Chair welcomed Sean Lyons from Waterford Institute of Technology to the PMC. He provided the PMC with a presentation describing the approved operation's aims and objectives.

57. The Chair thanked Sean Lyons for his presentation and offered members the opportunity to ask any questions. A useful Q&A session was held, and many probing questions were posed by the members.

Agenda Item 9 Any Other Business

58. SB took the opportunity to reflect upon the contribution that DO'B had made to the programme and the partnership between Ireland and Wales. Reflecting that they had now worked together through three Ireland Wales programming cycles, SB recognised DO'B's leadership in Wales and thanked him for the way he had conducted business and for the dedication and passion he had shown in the high levels of effective partnership and co-operation which had been achieved. SB wished him well in his retirement.

59. GO'K echoed SB's comments in relation to DOB's contribution. He recognised the quality and success of the co-operation programme and remarked on the value attached to it by the Irish Government. He stressed the need to look to a co-operation future beyond 2014-2020. GO'K wished DO'B all the best for his future and was looking forward to working with Sioned Evans as the new CEO.

60. DO'B offered his thanks to SB and GO'K for their kind words and referred to his affection for the programme and its partnership working.. The relationship forged was deep, over twenty years through this programme with over €250m committed to some 300 co-operation projects which have benefited communities and business. DO'B thanked the Irish Government, the Southern Assembly and his colleagues for their unstinting support at official and political levels. He thanked current and former PMC and PSC members for their contribution to the success of the programmes over the years. In recognising the role of co-operation programmes in developing relationships and friendships as well as investments, he wished the Programme every success in the future.

61. Action Point 09.05.2017/4 Phillipa Morgan (PM) to circulate a date for the next meeting likely to be scheduled for 23rd November 2017 in South Wales.

IRELAND WALES 2007 – 2013



Ireland Wales Programme 2007-2013 Meeting

Agenda Item 1 – 2007-2013 Final Implementation Report (including position on closure)

1. DK confirmed that the Final Implementation Report, further to its approval by the PMC, had been submitted to the Commission before the March 2017 deadline. The Closure Package included a Final Report, Final Claim, and Final Control Report. DK was pleased to announce that subject to the Commission's confirmation, the 2007/2013 programme achieved a 97% draw down and an error rate being well below 2% materiality level. He said that the Irish Government were currently waiting for the EC to respond to the Closure Package confirming they have 5 months to do so.
2. MVDV clarified the role of the Commission regarding the final checks highlighting that should the Irish Government need to respond to any questions posed by the Commission there is a two month turnaround in place.
3. DO'B congratulated his colleagues from Ireland on their achievement of completing the closure process given the complexities that are attached to this process.
4. The meeting was closed.

Annex 1 – List of Meeting Attendees

<u>Name</u>	<u>Organisation</u>
Michael McGarth	DPER
Gwyn Evans	WLGA
Sian Williams	Natural Resources Wales
Dr Fiona Harris	HEA Wales
Gavin George	Welsh Government
Rhiannon Phillips	Welsh Government
Jonathan Earl	Chambers Ireland
Cllr Seamus Cosai Fitzgerald	Southern Regional Assembly Councillor
Deirdre Finlay	WHEEL
Dave Corcoran	Department of Communication, Climate and Environment
Cllr Brian McDonagh	E&MRA
Michael Clifford	Dept of Job Enterprise and Innovation
Colm O'Connor	Dept. of Transport, Tourism and Sport
Stewart Roche	Higher Education Authority
Marianne Van de Vorle	EU Desk Officer
Sarah Clarke	ICTU
Damien O'Brien	WEFO
Sioned Evans	WEFO
Jane McMillan	WEFO
Mike Pollard	WEFO
Linda Weaver	WEFO
Phillipa Morgan	WEFO
Geariod O'Keefee	DPER
Stephen Blair	SRA

David Kelly	SRA
Breda Curran	SRA
Marie Harnett	SRA
Caitriona Phelan	SRA
Edel Hunt	SRA

Annex 2 – List of Apologies

<u>Name</u>	<u>Organisation</u>
Barbara Burchell	WLGA – North Wales
Helen Morgan	WLGA – South Wales
Cllr Meryl Gravell	WLGA – South Wales
Cllr Ronnie Hughes	WLGA – North Wales
Professor Richard Davies	HEA Wales
Dr Alastair Davies	Welsh Government
Lucy Corfield	Welsh Government
Deirdre Garvey	WHEEL
Patrick Lilly	WEFO
Bethan Thomas	WEFO