



**Special EU Programmes Body**  
**Comhlacht na gClár Speisialta AE**  
**Special EU Schemes Board**



**European Union**  
European Regional  
Development Fund  
Investing in your future

**INTERREG VA PROGRAMME**  
**NORTHERN IRELAND, THE BORDER REGION OF IRELAND AND WESTERN**  
**SCOTLAND**  
**(2014 - 2020)**

**CCI No: 2014TC16RFCB047**

**DRAFT MINUTES MONITORING COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> May 2021**

**Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams**

**Attendance**

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

**1. Welcome and Introduction by Chairperson**

**The Chair** welcomed attendees to the twelfth meeting of the INTERREG VA Programme Monitoring Committee (PMC) 2014 – 2020, the second to be held remotely via Microsoft Teams.

**The Chair** welcomed **EU Commission Desk Officer, Marianne Van De Vorle** to the meeting, accompanied by Peace Desk Officers **Kris Magnus** and **Joanne Knight**, observing. The Chair introduced the new Managing Authority Director Paul Beattie.

**The Chair** outlined changes in the INTERREG VA PMC membership, and asked newly appointed Members to extend the sincere gratitude of SEUPB to departing representatives whom they are replacing.

**The Chair** provided an update on developments in Programme implementation since the previous PMC meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2020, which consisted of the following;

- As the Programme is fully committed, there is limited opportunity for projects to request additional funding to address issues relating to Covid. The SEUPB has instead provided flexibilities around remote working, targets, and output achievement on a case by case basis;
- The SEUPB is in receipt of a significant number of requests for modifications in terms of outputs or end dates, which will be elaborated upon in the Joint Secretariat (JS) presentation;
- Detail of the effect of Covid restrictions on project activity, particularly for the Environment projects, who have lost windows for seasonal data collection;
- Covid restrictions have set the Programme back against its normal achievement at this stage of the Programme cycle, and;
- Members will be provided with a short video from the Collaborative Action for the Natura Network (CANN) project, which received a visit from the Chair the previous week.

## **2. Agree agenda**

The agenda was agreed.

## **3. Conflict of Interest**

**The Chair** thanked those Members and Advisors who have returned Conflicts of Interest and Code of Conduct forms to the Secretariat in the mandatory annual exercise.

No further conflicts were declared.

## **4. Video presentation: Collaborative Action for the Natura Network (CANN)**

The Committee heard how the CANN project, (awarded around €9million under 2.1; Environment: Recovery of Protected Habitats and Species), aims to protect endangered species and restore natural habitats on a cross-border basis and enhance the condition of protected habitats and priority species found in Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and Western Scotland.

The Committee was provided with a short video on the project, featuring Lead Partner Newry, Mourne and Down District Council. (<https://vimeo.com/531417487/e87ab7ba2e>)

The Chair discussed some of the project's work as a representation of the impact of INTERREG funding.

The Monitoring Committee;

- Noted the project presentation video

## **5. Minutes of Previous Meeting – 24 November 2020**

The Monitoring Committee approved the minutes of 24 November 2020 as a true and accurate record of the previous meeting. The minutes will be uploaded to the SEUPB website.

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| <b>AP 1: Minutes to be uploaded to the SEUPB website</b> |
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## **6. Matters arising**

**The Chair** provided an overview of the matters arising from the previous meeting, all of which have been actioned or will be elaborated upon later in the meeting agenda.

## **7. Update on Programme Implementation**

**Paul Beattie, Managing Authority (MA) Director**, provided a Programme-level presentation on implementation which consisted of the following main points;

- The Programme is committed to a 102% value, or €288.7 million supporting project delivery;
- There have been extensive requests for modifications across the Programme as a result of Covid. The SEUPB has taken a practical and proactive approach, providing guidance and support, and offering flexibility around targets, outputs and extensions to project end dates;
- The SEUPB continues to engage with projects around adaptations to activity, extensions and budget modifications within the Value of the Letter of Offer to support implementation and achievement of targets;

- Of a total budget allocation of €282,730,425, €288,728,023 has been committed (102.1%). Other matched funding from public and private sources adds an additional €22,671,833 (8%) of value;
- There are around four hundred claims in the system, a number of which are delayed due to missing documentation or supporting information. The FCU continues to work with project partners to process current and historical claims in a timely manner. Due to their efforts, the number of older claims has steadily reduced in recent months;
- **The MA Director** explained the N+3 requirement. The SEUPB is in a position to meet the 2021 target, with cumulative year to date expenditure of €128.7m, €16.7m remaining to the target, €19m of certified expenditure available to declare and a forecasted €22m to be declared over the remainder of the year. Therefore, a surplus of €26m is forecast however, this is not guaranteed, and the SEUPB will continue to work with applicants to maximise the position;
- An emerging underspend across the Programme has been identified, and may offer an opportunity for additional commitment to ensure that Programme objectives are achieved;
- There are four impact evaluations underway. **The MA Director** outlined comments by the evaluators on the resilience and adaptability of both projects and the JS. Evaluation conferences have been delayed from 2020 until the second half of 2021 due to Covid restrictions;
- In developing the Peace Plus Programme, the Managing Authority is responsible for completing the Cooperation Programme and designing a framework for development support. A Local Authority assistance plan has been put in place;
- Consultation has taken place around the development of a Small Grants Programme. Research is planned into thematic roadmaps on tourism, digital towns and villages and social economy, and;
- Work is ongoing to develop and adapt the JeMs system to replace the existing eMS system for Peace Plus.

**The JS Director** provided a presentation at project level which included the following main points;

- The JS focus is shifting to project completion, while Covid remains a significant challenge to the operating environment;
- A high volume of change requests have been received, mainly project extensions, due to the effect of Covid restrictions. The JS are trying to limit extensions to 6 months or less where possible;

- It is forecast that over 80% of INTERREG projects will now complete in 2022 and 2023, including the complex Greenway projects. The JS are ensuring Lead Partners are aware of requirements around their project end date, eligibility of spend and output achievements, should the modifications they have requested be approved;
- **Research and Innovation.** Research and Innovation projects have experienced issues in receiving essential consumables due to Covid, the Ireland / Northern Ireland Protocol and the Suez Canal blockage, however, these difficulties are easing;
- Covid restrictions meant PhD students could not access labs and slowed achievement against the lab hours output. A number of extension requests relate to the PhD target hours, and the objective will now complete in mid 2022;
- The BREATH project has been awarded an additional €400,000 of additional funding, allowing research on human tissue, and an extension to March 2023 has been approved for the Co Innovate project;
- **Environment.** Covid restrictions temporarily suspended site work, data collection and seasonal surveys under the Environment objective;
- The SWIM project completed in December 2020, the first to complete under the Marine theme, having made a tangible difference to bathing water quality predictions on 6 beaches in Northern Ireland and 3 in Ireland;
- **The JS Director** detailed the effect of the Meenbog dam burst on the Source to Tap project, and informed the Committee that the project had measuring equipment in place downstream of the event, allowing for data collection and analysis. Scientists will publish and share the resulting data in the near future;
- In addition, the project has received over 100 applicants to the Land Incentive Scheme, leaving a lasting legacy;
- The SWELL project has completed or almost completed work in NI, and progressed towards construction in Ireland in the coming weeks;
- The objective is on track to achieve its outputs with extensions supporting activity lost due to Covid. The JS is working with experts from the Accountable Departments to complete verification of declared outputs.
- **Sustainable Transport.** Mobilisation of the FASTER project is underway, making progress in terms of recruitment and mapping the existing charging infrastructure and grid capacity;

- The SEUPB has procured external expertise to assist in the delivery and reporting of progress under the objective in cognisance of the time available before Programme closure;
- All 3 Greenway projects have submitted formal requests for additional funding. As the Programme is fully or overcommitted, the matter is being discussed with Sponsor Departments.
- Both the Ulster and North West Greenways have met with the JS to discuss concerns around their routes and their ability to achieve in full before Programme closure, as implementation will continue into 2023. The JS is working to manage the risks;
- **Health.** The Changing Lives project completed in April 2021, supporting 200 families affected by ADHD. The online closure event launched their evaluation report, with a strong focus on learning;
- Implementation continues for the remaining Health projects; the iRecovery project has developed a new online resource for college engagement and the CoHSync project continues to support those wishing to implement a healthier lifestyle, and;
- In January 2021, the Steering Committee approved extensions to the MPower and MACE projects.

**The EU Commission Desk Officer** welcomed the provision of project updates and highlighted the alignment of INTERREG projects to the Green Deal. The Desk Officer advised close monitoring on the certification of costs, particularly around the significant claims workload, and on training for Lead Partners if documentation around claims is a systemic issue.

**The Chair** assured Members certification and achievement of outputs are being closely monitored, given the challenging N+3 targets in 2022.

**The DPER representative** thanked the Directors and acknowledged a difficult year of operations. She discussed the challenges ahead and looked forward to working on the mobilisation of the FASTER project and the Greenway projects, while developing and implementing the PEACE PLUS Programme. The DPER representative thanked SEUPB for their work in supporting projects in unique circumstances.

**The Chair** agreed the significance of upcoming challenges and in achieving current outputs, as well the urgent need for the PEACE PLUS Programme.

**The DoF representative** thanked the SEUPB for their work over an unpredictable 24 months, and reiterated the Department's support in identifying and mitigating risks and potential challenges in both the current and future Programme.

**The Chair** welcomed the acknowledgements, and reminded the PMC that they remain vital to the operation of the current INTERREG Programme.

The PEACE IV PMC requested the provision of a risk register in future PMC meeting papers; the Chair felt this would also benefit the INTERREG PMC.

**The IBEC representative** commended the SEUPB for their work in the context of a cross-border body in support of the Good Friday Agreement, and emphasised the importance of projects continuing their momentum with integrated cross-border management.

Referring to the ongoing impact evaluations, the representative asked if projects could be instructed to provide a section on the cross border element of their operations, including obstacles, lessons learned and projections on the legacy of cross border relationships built during implementation/activity.

Lastly, the IBEC representative welcomed reference to the Green Deal, and spoke to its benefits for the PEACE PLUS Programme.

**The Chair** thanked the IBEC representative for his comments, stating that maintaining cross border links is a concern projects regularly raise with the SEUPB, and an important aspect of the PEACE PLUS Programme. This topic will also be covered in the risk register to be provided to members at the next PMC meeting.

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| <b>AP 2: Risk register to be included in future PMC meeting papers</b> |
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**The Monitoring Committee;**

- **Noted** the progress in implementation of the Programme.

## 8. Annual Implementation Report 2020

**The MA Director** drew Members' attention to the draft 2020 Annual Implementation Report provided in the meeting papers, and explained the requirement to submit the report to the European Commission by 31<sup>st</sup> May each year, with PMC approval.

### **The Monitoring Committee;**

- **Approved** the 2020 INTERREG VA Annual Implementation report for submission to the EU Commission

## 9. Update on Implementation of the Communications Strategy

**The Communications Manager** provided a presentation which contained the following;

- The Communications team's involvement in a number of virtual project closure events, such as those of the SWIM and Changing Lives projects, as well as key launch and milestone events;
- The Communications Manager highlighted upcoming closure events over the summer, and welcomed the possibility of transitioning to physical events;
- The Spring edition of Your EU was released with a piece on the Renewable Engine project;
- Reporting on achievement of Programme Output indicators, which have been exceeded to date;
- Reporting on media coverage and tone, and engagement with the SEUPB's website and social media accounts;
- Europe Day on 09 May 2021 was marked with a celebratory piece in the Sunday Independent, with a featured case study on the NWCAM project;
- An overview of the PEACE PLUS digital marketing strategy, social media and consultation engagement. A video on Peace Plus consultation received the highest number of views of any SEUPB Youtube upload at 2,221 and;
- Findings of the Annual Stakeholder and Perception survey.

**The Scotland Europa representative** firstly congratulated the SEUPB on the quality of the PMC meeting papers provided, enabling the PMC to do their job effectively. The representative welcomed the figure of 76% of people surveyed in Scotland recognised



the impact of INTERREG in Western Scotland, and the inclusion of projects with Scottish partners in the Citizens' Summary report.

The representative reminded the PMC of Scotland's desire to continue engaging with the PEACE PLUS Programme, and had viewed Peace Plus consultation video with great interest.

**The EU Commission Desk Officer** thanked the Communications Manager and welcomed the adaptation to online operations, as well as the increased awareness of Programme impact since the previous meeting.

**The Monitoring Committee;**

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

**10. PEACE PLUS Programme update**

**MA Programme Manager, Declan McGarrigle**, provided a presentation on the work to develop the Peace Plus Programme since the previous meeting, which consisted of the following main points;

- The overall Programme budget has been confirmed at around €1 billion;
- Detail on the public consultation, which took place between 10th March and 12th May 2021;
- The administrative tasks required before submission of the Cooperation Programme to the EU Commission;
- Detail on the engagement with potential stakeholders, interest groups, and sectors, who acted as communication multipliers to promote the consultation;
- Signposting Members to the consultation navigation papers available on the SEUPB website, which provided potential applicants and interested parties with an overview of the six thematic areas;
- Details of ongoing analysis of the 415 responses received. The initial quantitative analysis indicates strong support for each investment area – between 92% and 62% responses in “strong agreement”;
- Broad support for the investment budgets – between 76% and 63% “strongly agree” responses;

- Detailing support for the Programme's equality screening. It is likely that a short addendum to the equality screening will be prepared and published to the SEUPB website. Any changes will not deflect from the overall equality screening decision;
- Detail on proposed new administrative arrangements, such as pre-application support and greater use of Simplified Cost Options;
- A full consultation report will be provided in the coming weeks, which will outline findings, analysis and recommendations on the content, and;
- The proposed Programme will be submitted to both Governments and the NSMC in June 2021, and to the EU Commission in July, dependent on adoption of the appropriate regulations. The SEUPB aims to release the first call in late 2021/early 2022.

**The Chair** welcomed the unexpected volume of responses and discussed the complexities in developing a Programme with 21 investment areas, 14 Government departments and numerous Departmental pairings between NI and Ireland.

**The Environmental Pillar representative** asked if the themes would be amended as a result of any consultation feedback received.

**The Chair** stated the SEUPB's intention to re-examine biodiversity elements of the Environmental objective for budget re-profiling, however the positive and supportive nature of the consultation means there have been no major changes suggested.

**The second Scotland Europa representative congratulated the SEUPB on a** robust consultation exercise, which was enthusiastically supported by Scottish partners. They informed the PMC that a number of the consultation responses were a result of collaboration with Scottish partners and organisations.

**The Equality Commission NI representative** sought clarification on the changes required to the equality screening.

**The MA Manager** responded, stating that the consultation had suggested the inclusion of some reports in the equality screening. The equality expert engaged by the SEUPB had advised the inclusions and other minor amendments could be made via an addendum to the equality screening, without an effect on the overall decision.

**The Monitoring Committee;**

- Noted progress in preparing for the PEACE PLUS Programme

**10. AOB**

No further business was declared

**11. Date of next meeting**

**The Chair** stated the next meeting will take place on **25 November 2021**, in a manner consistent with NI Covid guidance of the time, and concluded the meeting.

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**ANNEX I**

**ACTION POINTS/ISSUES OF CLARIFICATION**

**ARISING FROM MONITORING COMMITTEE**

**Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> May 2021, Remote meeting via MS Teams**

**ACTION POINTS**

| <b>ACTION</b>  | <b>TIMING</b>             | <b>RESPONSIBILITY</b> |
|--|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Previous minutes to be added to SEUPB website             | Following today's meeting | Managing Authority    |
| 2. Risk register to be included in future PMC meeting papers | Next PMC                  | Managing Authority    |

## **ANNEX II**

**Attendance – INTERREG VA Programme Monitoring Committee –Thursday 25<sup>th</sup>  
May 2021, remote meeting via Microsoft Teams**

### **Chair**

Gina McIntyre

Chief Executive Officer, SEUPB

### **Members**

Jim Millard

Scottish Government

Dominic McCullough

Department of Finance NI

Anne Marie Caulfield

DPER Ireland

Francesca Giannini

Scotland Europa

Blair Horan

ICTU Ireland

Paul Beattie

Managing Authority, the SEUPB

Leanne Massey

Joint Secretariat, the SEUPB

Robin Clarke

Highlands and Island Enterprise

Maura Farrell

Irish Rural Link

Geraldine McGahey

The Equality Commission NI

Déarbhla Sloan

NICVA

Sean Cronin

The Environmental Pillar

Donna Brodie

Scottish Environmental Protection Agency

Philip Maguire

CBI

Jean O'Mahoney

IHREC

Sean Cronin

The Environmental Pillar

Ivan Cooper

The Wheel

Michael D'Arcy

IBEC

### **Advisors**

Joanne Knight

The EU Commission

Paul Sheridan

Certifying Authority, the SEUPB

John McCandless

Communications, the SEUPB

Wendy Cooke

DAERA

|                   |                                  |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|
| Ciaran Crosbie    | Department for Infrastructure NI |
| Dave Loyal        | Department for the Economy NI    |
| David Flynn       | DHPLG Ireland                    |
| Sarah Taylor      | Department of Transport Ireland  |
| Declan McGarrigle | Managing Authority, the SEUPB    |

**Observers**

|                      |                                  |
|----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Christina McCartney  | Managing Authority, the SEUPB    |
| Pamela Meekin        | The CEO's Office, the SEUPB      |
| Catherine Clynes     | DPER                             |
| Peter Molloy         | DPER                             |
| David Lynch          | Department of Finance NI         |
| Mary Maguire         | Department of Finance NI         |
| Linda Stewart        | Scotland Europa                  |
| Betty Tyrell-Collard | ICTU Ireland                     |
| Caroline Coleman     | Scottish Contact Point           |
| Paul Boylan          | Joint Secretariat, the SEUPB     |
| Glenny Whitley       | Joint Secretariat, the SEUPB     |
| Julie Leathem        | Department for the Economy NI    |
| Orla Gray            | Department for Infrastructure NI |
| Tim Weir             | Department for Infrastructure NI |
| Sean McAteer         | NSMC                             |
| Deirdre Bourke       | NSMC                             |
| John Murray          | DAERA                            |
| Nicholas Meny        | Scottish Natural Heritage        |
| Ken Nelson           | Intertrade Ireland               |

**Secretariat (SEUPB)**

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| Tara McCormick | Managing Authority (minutes)           |
| Phil Heaton    | Managing Authority (technical support) |

**Apologies**

**Departing Representatives**

- Gillian MacDonald of Scottish Natural Heritage, replaced by Nicholas Meny;
- Elaine Colgan and Wendy Robinson from the Department of Health NI, replaced by Chris Matthews;
- Jim Sutherland of the Department for Infrastructure, who is replaced by Ciaran Crosbie;
- Owen Lyttle of DAERA, who is replaced by Colin Breen;
- Michael Spillane of DTTAS Ireland, replaced by Deirdre Donohoe, and;
- Emer McGeough of the North South Ministerial Programme, replaced by Deirdre Bourke.

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### **ANNEX III**

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

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| <b>CNCC</b>   | <b>Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside</b>                       |
| <b>DAERA</b>  | <b>Department Of Agriculture, Environment &amp; Rural Affairs NI</b>             |
| <b>DBEI</b>   | <b>Department of Business, Enterprise &amp; Innovation (Ireland)</b>             |
| <b>DfC</b>    | <b>Department for Communities (Northern Ireland)</b>                             |
| <b>DfE</b>    | <b>Department for the Economy (NI)</b>   |
| <b>DfI</b>    | <b>Department for Infrastructure (NI)</b>  |
| <b>DHPCLG</b> | <b>Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Ireland)</b> |
| <b>DJEI</b>   | <b>Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation Ireland</b>                     |
| <b>DoE</b>    | <b>Department of Education (Northern Ireland)</b>                                |
| <b>DoF</b>    | <b>Department of Finance (Northern Ireland)</b>                                  |
| <b>DoH</b>    | <b>Department of Health (Northern Ireland)</b>                                   |
| <b>DPER</b>   | <b>Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Ireland)</b>                     |
| <b>GDPR</b>   | <b>General Data Protection Regulation</b>  |
| <b>HMT</b>    | <b>Her Majesty's Treasury (UK)</b>   |
| <b>ICTU</b>   | <b>Irish Congress of Trade Unions</b>  |
| <b>NICVA</b>  | <b>Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action</b>                             |
| <b>NILGA</b>  | <b>Northern Ireland Local Government Association</b>                             |
| <b>NISRA</b>  | <b>Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency</b>                           |



|              |   |
|--------------|---|
| <b>NSMC</b>  | <b>North South Ministerial Council</b>              |
| <b>NWRA</b>  | <b>Northern Western Regional Assembly</b>           |
| <b>SCVO</b>  | <b>Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations</b> |
| <b>SEPA</b>  | <b>Scottish Environment Protection Agency</b>       |
| <b>SEUPB</b> | <b>Special European Union Programmes Body</b>       |
| <b>JS</b>    | <b>Joint Secretariat</b>                            |
| <b>MA</b>    | <b>Managing Authority</b>                           |

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