

WEDNESDAY 17 NOVEMBER
SIGNAL BUSINESS GROWTH CENTRE, BANGOR
AGREED MINUTES

1. Attendance

A list of attendees is attached at Annex A. Apologies received from Brendan Mackin (Trade Unions), Prof Brian Wood (Environment) and Peter Sangster (IFI).

2. Welcome

The Mayor of North Down, Alderman Valerie Kinghan welcomed the Committee to the Signal Business Growth Centre and the Borough of North Down.

3. Introduction

The **Chair** welcomed everyone to the fourteenth meeting of the Monitoring Committee and in particular new representatives attending from the Department of the Environment and the European Commission.

Due to resignations of the Business and Environment representatives and the non attendance of some Members of the Local Government sector, Members were advised that the Managing Authority will undertake a refreshment exercise before the next meeting to fill the vacant positions on the Committee.

4. Minutes and Matters Arising

4.1 The minutes of the meeting of 25 May were agreed with the following amendments:-

Page 2 Para 4 bullet point 1 Insert word 'good' before progress.

Page 4 Para 5 bullet point 5 New para inserted.

Page 6 Para 8 bullet point 3 New para inserted.

4.2 There were no matters arising.

5. **Progress Report on Implementation of the Programme**

A **Managing Authority representative** updated the Committee with a brief overview covering electronic drawdown, database population, Progress towards N+2 targets, Major project application and work carried out by the CSF working groups.

- ***Electronic Drawdown***

The Committee were informed that a ERDF claim had been submitted to the Commission using the Electronic Drawdown facility on the Structural funds database.

Following a query from the Managing Authority, the DG Regio representative **agreed** to discuss the non-acceptance of Electronic drawdown requests by DG Fish with her colleagues in that Directorate.

- ***Database Coverage***

The Committee were advised that in order to help improve the ability to report to the Monitoring Committee, the Managing Authority would like Departments to ensure the Monitoring data is inputted on the database asap.

- ***N+2 Targets***

Members were informed that the 2004 N+2 targets for ESF and FIFG have been met subject to the submission of claims for spend recorded on the database. The ERDF target is currently short and Departments have been asked to place all certified spend on the database asap.

The EAGGF N+2 target was discussed under a separate agenda item.

- ***Major Project – Gas Pipeline***

The **DG Regio representative** advised the Committee that the European Investment Bank (EIB) will decide upon on the Major Project Application in the near future.

The **Managing Authority representative** advised the Committee that a letter had been sent to the Commission regarding the major project application and a reduction in this year's ERDF N+2 target.

- ***Working Groups***

Members were updated on the progress of the Working Groups including:-

Environment

The Committee were advised that the Environment Working Group have produced a report reviewing the implementation of the Development Path Analysis in Northern Ireland.

Mainstreaming Equality

Members were advised that the working group is currently undertaking research into the impact of the programme on Section 75 groups.

- ***Annual Implementation Report (AIR)***

The Committee were advised that the AIR was approved by the Commission on 26 October 2004 and the Annual Review Meeting between the Managing Authority and the European Commission will take place on 2 December. The Managing Authority will circulate the minutes of this meeting in due course.

- ***Priority 1 Economic Growth and Competitiveness***

The **DETI Advisor** updated the Committee on the progress of this priority. Members were advised that all DETI measure continue to perform well and are likely to met targets and objectives set.

The **DRD Advisor** updated the Committee on the good progress of Measure 1.6.

- ***Priority 2 Employment***

The **DEL Advisor** updated the Committee on progress of this priority.

Members were informed that during the second call for applications. 92 applications were received and 61 of these applicants were successful.

Members were advised that under Measure 2.4 DEL have identified a project on Lifelong Learning to replace the individual Learning Accounts.

Following a query on the high rate of rejections under the priority from the Local Government representative, DEL **agreed** to provide an explanation for the figures provided in the Progress report.

The **DE Advisor** updated the Committee on the progress under Measures 2.4 and 2.5

- ***Priority 3 Urban and Social Revitalisation***

The **DSD advisor** updated the Committee on the progress of this priority. Members were advised that the Department have identified new activities to be funded under Measure 3.1 and the department hoped to claim £9 million this year for this project.

The **DE advisor** updated the Committee on the good progress of Measure 3.4. Members were informed that this measure was almost complete.

- ***Priority 4 Agriculture, Rural Development, Forestry and Fisheries***

The **DARD advisor** updated the Committee on the progress of this priority.

The **Agri-Rural representative** raised the issue of length of time taken by the Department to make eligibility decisions. The **DARD representative** noted these comments.

- ***Priority 5 Environment***

The **DRD representative** updated the Committee on the good progress made on the DRD element of this priority. Members were informed that the 2 of the water treatment schemes have been completed and the third is 99% complete. The two sewerage treatment schemes have also been completed.

The DOE representative update the Committee on the progress made on the DOE element of this priority. Members were advised the Department have currently issued 11 Letters of Offer. The Department has also acquired additional resources to help process other applications.

Alison Clydesdale and Davina Quigley, DE gave a presentation on C2K funded in Measure 2.5 Education/Training ICT and Infrastructure.

The Committee noted the progress made in implementation of the programme.

6. EAGGF Action Plan

The **DARD representative** outlined the proposals contained in this paper.

- Members were advised that current projections showed a shortfall of 3.5 meuro for EAGGF funding. The Committee were informed that DARD had identified a number of actions to be undertaken in order to alleviate the current level of underspend. The actions identified would be retrospective and will not reduce the level of funding available to other projects. These actions include:-
 - funding the Rural Connect Advisory Service in Measure 4.6
 - funding other CAFRE training course identified by DARD as eligible for funding under Measure 4.1
 - the possibility of producing six-monthly accounts for existing BSP training courses to allow an extra six months spend.
 - identifying 4 projects funded by EHS which may be funded under EAGGF.
- Entering into additional contract with Ulster Community Investment Trust which would require a reallocation of funding within the Rural Development Measures.
- Following a number of issues raised by the **Agri-Rural representative**, it was agreed that the Agri-rural forum would be consulted on the review of EAGGF measures of the programme in 2005. The **Managing Authority** would consider and agreed with the Agri-Rural representative the precise method of consultation before the review commences.
- The **DG Agri representative** reminded the Committee that payment claims needed to be forwarded to the Commission to help them monitor N+2.
- The Committee noted the DARD Action plan to meet the EAGGF N+2 target and agreed that any allocation of funding to Measure 4.12 would be agreed by written procedure.

- The Committee also noted that DARD will bring forward a paper reviewing the EAGGF Measure Allocations to the next meeting of the Monitoring Committee.

7. Mid-term Review of the BSP Programme – Update

A **Managing Authority representative** updated the Committee on the progress on the Mid-term review and the need to carry out a Mid-term Evaluation update by 31 December 2005.

- The Committee agreed to re-establish the Evaluation Steering Group to take forward the Evaluation update. It was also agreed that this group will take forward the CSF Mid-term Evaluation update.
- **Miceal McCoy** (Agri-Rural), **Frances McCandless** (Voluntary and Community) and **Pat Mallon** (Local Government) were nominated to the group.
- The **Managing Authority agreed** to circulate Working Paper 9, the Update of the Mid-term Evaluation of Structural Fund Interventions to the members nominated to the group.
- **The Managing Authority also agreed** to contact the Environment representative from the CSF Monitoring Committee to ask her to join the group.
- Members were also advised that an exercise would be undertaken by the Managing Authority to refresh the membership of the Monitoring Committees, particularly the Local Government representation. The Managing Authority will take this forward through NILGA.

8. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

9. Date of next meetings

It was agreed the next meetings of the Monitoring Committee will take place on 26 April 2005 and 18 October 2005. The Secretariat will contact Members regarding venues and times.