

# **INFORMATION SOCIETY WORKING GROUP-** **MINUTES**

**Date:** 30<sup>th</sup> January 2004

**Venue:** Letterkenny Public Service Centre

**Present:** Howard Keery (Chair)  
Maeve Hamilton (DETI)  
Alistair Charles (DETI)  
Colm McColgan (ERNACT)  
George Hunter (SIPTU)  
Dolores O'Reilly (University of Ulster)  
Rosemary Mulholland (DEL)  
Don Harley (DSD)

**Apologies:** Seamus McAleavey (NICVA)  
Gwen Savage (Business Sector)  
Anne Connaty (DETI- Telecoms)  
Kate Burns (Agri-rural sector)  
Bernie Traill (DFP)

Howard began by explaining to the group that the Chairman, Seamus McAleavey, was unable to attend. Howard proposed to chair the meeting in Seamus' absence, the group agreed.

Howard thanked Colm for organising the use of the Centre and lunch for the group.

## **1. Minutes of the last meeting.**

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed.

## **2. 'Best Practice' Conference.**

- Howard opened the discussion by stating that he felt it was important that the Conference was seen to be 'different' to the plethora of other conferences that take place.
- George enquired as to what sort of finance was likely to be available. Maeve informed the group that similar conferences cost around £35,000. Maeve also stated that up to £20,000 was available from DFP- the remainder could be raised from sponsors and charging entry to private sector.
- Colm McColgan described a conference that he had attended recently in Madrid with delegates from several different regions in Europe. Colm felt that in order to adequately capture a picture of best practice it would be necessary to invite representatives from across Europe and not just NI and the ROI.

- Dolores stated that it was important to have a mixture of both the technology suppliers and the users on the ground, (i.e. the projects).
- Howard felt it was important that the objective of the conference was clear at the outset. This would enable us to measure the success of the conference. The objectives of the conference are to: Disseminate Information Society Best Practice, Increase awareness of Information Society and provide a networking opportunity for technology providers, implementing bodies and project promoters.
- Don asked how the idea for the conference had come about. Howard explained about Richard Gaunt's presentation and how the group felt that examples of best practice were not being adequately disseminated across the province. Don stated that it was important that there was a clear link between the conference and the CSF. Howard agreed and stated that the conference would help keep up the momentum of the ISWG. The conference would also help raise awareness of the eEurope objectives (one of the key recommendations to come from the PWC report).
- Don agreed with these points but still felt that there needed to be a clearer connection with the structural funds. This was unanimously accepted. Howard stated that projects actually benefiting from structural funds must form part of the target audience of the conference.
- The group then discussed who the target audience should be. Colm stated that there would be two distinct sectors- the intermediaries (technology suppliers) and the actual project promoters. Howard added that implementing bodies and practitioners of best practice should also be invited. The group then discussed how to identify best practice projects and agreed to ask implementing bodies to nominate their best projects.
- Colm suggested using the 12 topics from the eEurope Action Plan to target projects and ask them how their project meets the particular topic.
- The question of how to judge these projects was again raised. Colm stated that he felt there was sufficient knowledge within the group to set up a panel in order to judge the projects.
- Dolores advised the group to be wary of any potential sponsor 'hi-jacking' the event and putting their own methods forward as best practice.
- In terms of format for the conference Colm suggested wiring up an area of a town. He suggested one of the big telecoms providers could connect approximately 1 square mile of a town with wireless technology. Buildings such as schools, clinics, libraries, offices etc. could then be used to showcase examples of cutting edge technologies. The group felt this was a good idea as it was more innovative than a simple conference.

- Don expressed concerns that the eEurope Action Plan 2005 did not specifically cover e-community, stating that there is currently a lot of work underway in developing the e-community infrastructure. It was agreed not to overlook this important area.
- Colm then expanded on his earlier suggestion of wiring up a hotel and suggested wiring up an area of a town. He suggested one of the big telecoms providers could connect approximately 1 square mile of a town with wireless technology. Buildings such as schools, clinics, libraries, offices etc. could then be used to showcase examples of cutting edge technologies.
- George questioned what the next stage was- i.e. do we need to inform the Monitoring Committees of our plans and what is the likelihood of them objecting. Howard replied that we will inform the Monitoring Committee at the next meeting but would not envisage any objections.
- Rosemary asked how long it would take to tender for and appoint an event organiser. Maeve replied that it should not take any longer than two weeks.
- Possible partners were identified as BT/Eircomm/ECIT. Colm stated that the group should look at each category before deciding on partners.
- The subject of location was then discussed. Colm suggested Londonderry as it is close to the border and has everything we need (university, colleges, schools, hotels etc.). Colm also stated that wireless technology is already being set up in parts of the city. Maeve endorsed Colm's suggestion of Derry as Colm already has several contacts in the city.
- The group then agreed to set up a sub-group comprising of Colm, Delores, Anne, John, Don and Maeve to oversee the organisation of the conference
- It was agreed that Terms of Reference for the appointment of event organisers should be drawn up and that the secretariat would analyse the tenders and select the best one based on a scoring frame agreed by the group.

### **3. Next Meeting**

- The next meeting will involve only the sub-group and will be held in Workspace Draperstown, Magherafelt on 27<sup>th</sup> February at 12pm.