



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

Programme Monitoring Committee - Meeting 12  
Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> November 2022 10:00am – 11:30am (GMT)  
Microsoft Teams.

A list of attendees and apologies is at Annex 1.

### **Agenda item 1 – Welcome – Opening and Introductions**

1. The Chair (Peter Ryland) welcomed everyone in Welsh and English. It was mentioned that the next PMC will be the final one and is planned to be held in person. He noted that at the recent Ireland Wales Ministerial Forum ministers from Ireland and Wales had been very complementary about the programme and what it had achieved. The Chair welcomed Suzanne Harte, Andrew Condon, Iain Quick, Lila Farkas for WCVA and Heledd Owen. Members were informed that a transcript is being taken for minuting purposes but will not be retained.
2. The Co-chair (David Kelly) welcomed members in Gaeilge (Irish Gaelic) and English.

### **Agenda item 2 – Note of PMC Meeting 11 including action points**

3. The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.
4. Action point 1. – MA to provide an update on Cross Cutting Themes for future meetings. This is being left open until the next PMC when a full report will be provided.
5. Action point 2. – Introductions in native languages. This has been implemented and will also be in place for the next PMC.

### **Agenda item 3 – Programme State of Play Report – Mike Wallwork**

6. MW presented the report compiled by the Managing Authority in conjunction with the Joint Secretariat. Members were invited to note progress on

implementation since the last PMC meeting, consider the estimated out-turn position on commitment against allocation and latest position on progress against indicators.

7. Programme Steering Committee had approved two Priority Axis 3 projects since the last meeting: PA3 – Portalis and CUPHAT. Both projects had progressed into delivery phase having completed mobilisation and are being monitored closely as they need to be complete by September 2023.
8. Covid pandemic has been challenging for all European Structural Investment programmes, and in particular ETC programmes which face specific challenges due to their cross-border nature. MA & JS recognise that partners have encountered difficulties, and therefore adopted a flexible approach to assist projects, including granting no cost extensions to delivery periods. The JS is now unable to agree any new extensions (not already in progress) due to the need to meet project and programme closure deadlines.
9. The headline commitment position is 106% of programme allocation. €84.08 million ERDF has been awarded to projects including Technical Assistance, this includes 23 cooperation projects, 7 of which have had a phase 2 approved. Further information is available in Annex 2 of the report.
10. The exercise conducted by JS in 2021 provided a detailed forecast of decommitments for last year's PMC. Monitoring has continued over last 12 months through regular review meetings with each project where expenditure to date against financial targets and future projections are analysed. MW invited members to consider the table at 7.1 of the report and note the current forecast out-turn of 100%. Approximately €4.5 million could be returned to the programme upon closure based on current forecasts. However, this figure needed to be treated with a degree of caution and is solely based on current forecasts.
11. To date 6 projects have closed, 1 project is currently in closure and 1 due to go into closure end of December 2022. The remainder are due to complete by September 2023.
12. There is no intention to request a programme modification given the 10% flexibility allowed in the Commission regulations. The JS and MA are keeping a close eye on commitment beyond the 100% allocation.
13. €50.8 million euros has been paid to projects (64% of programme allocation). Claims of €3.6 million are awaiting payment which means 69% of programme funds have been utilised to date.

14. The 2022 N+3 target has been achieved. Over €28m remains to be paid out in the final year of the Programme and the MA and JS recognise this will be a challenge.
15. Performance Framework Indicators are exceeding all targets currently, despite impact of pandemic, although some case level indicator targets are unlikely to be achieved. WEFO commissioned an independent review of indicators across all of the Structural Fund programmes including the IW programme and no significant issues were identified.
16. Mid-term evaluation was published in May 2020 – the main recommendations included a contribution analysis should be undertaken and an exploration of the Programme’s approach to Cross Cutting Themes. MA is planning to undertake a scoping of the ex-post evaluation that will identify and analyse the outcomes from individual project evaluations. This will feed into the full ex-post evaluation which is to be carried out in 2024. A full update will be provided to the PMC at the final meeting.
17. MW highlighted the important contribution the programme makes to the Cross Cutting Themes and that will be explored in detail at the next meeting.
18. Members were asked to refer to Annex 3 of the report which details communication activities on both sides of the water.
19. MW concluded that the MA are content with the position of the Programme taking into account the impact of the UK’s exit from the EU and the Covid 19 pandemic, as well as subsequent supply chain issues. Additionally, Avian flu is impacting one project in particular: ECHOES, which involves tagging and monitoring of wild birds and a meeting will take place on 2<sup>nd</sup> December to discuss mitigations being put in place.
20. MW thanked members of the JS team for their hard work and professionalism which has enabled the programme to succeed during challenging times. Thanks were also given to the Chair and PMC members for their support. Questions were invited.
21. Chair acknowledged the external challenges which could not have been anticipated and congratulated everyone involved in bringing the Programme within reach of delivering what it was set out to achieve.
22. Mike McGrath (DPER) – Thanked all involved in getting the programme to this stage. He noted the planning for the Ex-post Evaluation in 2024, stressing the importance of having a strong evidence base to say what the programme has achieved.

23. Noel Farrell (EU Desk Officer) advised that the Commission is interested in getting a real picture of indicator attainment or lack thereof. He stressed the importance of providing a solid rationale to explain why certain indicators targets have not been attained. The reality needs to be backed up with solid evidence.

#### **Agenda item 4 – Project Presentation – Selkie**

24. TJ Horgan, project manager from Selkie gave a Power Point presentation:



WEFO 30th.pptx

25. The Chair invited the members to ask any questions or make any comments following the presentation. He acknowledged that Selkie is a finalist in the #MyEUStory awards and wished them the best of luck.

26. David Kelly commented that it was great to see the progress this project has made and how it has demonstrated the real benefit and value of cooperation.

27. Members noted that they had found the presentation very useful but no further detailed questions or comments were made.

#### **Agenda item 5 – Future Co-operation – Geraint Green**

28. GG acknowledged that many members are aware that we have been exploring a new phase of cooperation, building on the success and outcomes of the Ireland Wales Programme, and members have just seen exactly what the programme can deliver in the Selkie presentation.

29. Political and budget challenges remain but there have also been some positive developments. The Irish Sea Symposium held in June recognised the success of the Ireland Wales programme and also explored the potential of cooperating on a wider geographic space. Three initial priority areas were identified: Innovation; Sustainable 'Blue growth', and Culture and Communities. The event also highlighted the need for short term action and a medium-term plan to sustain the gains of the ETC programmes.

30. Positive discussions were held at the Ireland Wales Ministerial Forum in October with Irish and Welsh Ministers confirming their desire to continue cooperation and tasking officials to explore options.

31. At the Irish Sea stakeholder workshop last week there was support for the proposal for an informal 'Framework for co-operation across the Irish Sea space', reflecting the three priorities identified in the Symposium. This would complement existing strategies such as the Ireland Wales Shared Statement and Joint Action Plan and 2021-2027 Interreg programmes. Stakeholders were embracing the Framework thinking, planning events and building networks, demonstrating that they understand that this is about being 'Together Stronger' and leveraging opportunities and funding from a range of sources. Alongside presentations on Peace Plus and from Liverpool City region, it was good to see such a strong representation from the Ireland Wales programme. There was clearly a 'coalition of the willing' building around this agenda.
32. GG offered to share a presentation which sets out what he has spoken about in terms of the Irish Sea Framework and priorities, and members were welcome to engage with him outside the meeting.
33. The Chair noted the scale of the marine renewables industry coming to the Irish Sea and the capacity of our ports to capitalise on this. He also questioned if this desire to continue to co-operate would have happened had it not been for the strong relationships created by the Ireland Wales programme.
34. No questions were raised and the Chair thanked Geraint and the team and Irish stakeholders for making this happen.

#### **Agenda item 6 - Next PMC meeting: Celebration Event**

35. The Chair expressed hopes that the final PMC will be a face to face meeting and to use the opportunity to showcase what has been achieved. The Chair invited ideas from the members. He put forward an initial idea that members from Ireland could take the morning crossing on the Rosslare to Fishguard ferry; be greeted by Welsh members and Welsh led projects; then all take a midday crossing back and hold the PMC meeting on the ferry; once in Ireland there would be a chance to hear from Irish led projects; and finally an evening reception and dinner in Ireland. Welsh members would make their way home the day after.
36. The Co-Chair felt it would be very appropriate to have the PMC in the middle of the Irish Sea, halfway between both countries, and involve both Welsh and Irish projects in the final event.
37. Members showed support for the proposal and on that basis the Chair concluded that it should be explored further.

## AOB –

38. The Chair thanked MW and all of the team for organising the meeting.
39. The Co-chair introduced Enda Hogan from the SRA to the committee. EH thanked the committee for the opportunity.
40. Noel Farrell welcomed the opportunity to meet up in person next year.

Joint Secretariat  
December 2022

## Action Points

1. GG to share his presentation on the Framework for Irish Sea Co-operation

### List of Attendees

Name	Organisation
PMC	
Abigail Phillips	Welsh Government - Department for Innovation
Lilla Farkas	Wales Council for Voluntary Action
Heledd Owen	WG – Tourism & Marketing
Chris O’Connell	WEFO Equal Opportunities and Environmental Sustainability
Donal Nolan	Chambers Ireland
Sarah Clarke	Irish Congress of Trade Unions
Hugh O’Reilly	WHEEL
Brigid Manton	Cllrs Finegal
Suzanne Harte	Department for Public Expenditure and Reform
Michael McGrath	Department for Public Expenditure and Reform
Andrew Condon	Department for Public Expenditure and Reform
Tadhg O’Shea	Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media
Other	

Noel Farrell	EU Desk Officer
TJ Horgan	Selkie Project (Agenda Item 4)
Dr Jimmy Murphy	Selkie Project (Agenda Item 4)
Dr Anke Heuberger	Selkie Project (Agenda Item 4)
Peter Ryland	WEFO
Geraint Green	WEFO
Mike Wallwork	WEFO
Patrick Lilly	WEFO
Bethan Thomas	WEFO
Sian Benson	WEFO
Richard Self	Welsh Government – Head of Research, Monitoring and Evaluation
Charlotte Guinee	Research, Monitoring and Evaluation
David Kelly	SRA
Enda Hogan	SRA
Breda Curran	SRA
Samantha Richardson	SRA

List of Apologies

Name	Organisation
Mike Pollard	WEFO - Head of Territorial Cooperation
Paul Spencer	Pro Vice Chancellor – Research and Innovation
Veronica Cunningham	The Marine Institute: Foras na Mara