



## European Union

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### Minutes of the INTERREG IVA Review Panel Meeting

Monday 21 March 2011, 2:00pm  
SEUPB Offices, Belfast

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In Attendance:	Pat Colgan	SEUPB (Chair)
	Michael Hughes	MC Panel Member
	John Anderson	MC Panel Member
	Niamh Kenny	Independent Member
	John Cherry	SEUPB (Secretariat)
	Christine Markey	SEUPB (Secretariat)

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#### 1. Introductions

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

#### 2. Agenda

The Agenda was agreed.

#### 3. Register of Interests/Conflicts of Interest

None

#### 4. Review

##### **The Review of NWRCBG – Recreation and Visitor Trails (Ref: 007219)**

*Representatives from NWRCBG and the Joint Technical Secretariat (JTS) were invited to enter the room.*

In Attendance:

- Maureen Doherty, NWRCBG
- Anne McNaught, NWRCBG
- Richard Gillen, Limavady Borough Council
- Tracey Scullion, JTS
- Eimear Murphy, JTS

After introductions, the Chair outlined the procedures to be followed. The Chair then invited the Project promoters to outline the reasons for their request for a review.

The representatives for NWRCBG presented their case. The main points included:

- The appeal was on the grounds that there was a failure in adherence to procedures.
- There were nine points identified where the JTS assessment report presented to the Steering Committee (SC) failed to include information that had been supplied to the JTS and/or to the Economic Appraiser.
- The Economic Appraisal (EA) failed to ask cognizance of information that was submitted by the Lead Partner.
- There was a failure to provide the SC with the correct information that had been supplied which the Lead Partner feels materially affected the decision.

*The Chair thanked the project promoters for their presentation and invited the JTS to respond.*

Representatives from the JTS made the following points:

- The project could have gone to SC on two prior occasions for rejection, however the JTS felt that, due to the lack of approvals in the NW region, this application should be afforded every opportunity to receive a positive outcome.
- The JTS received a positive EA, however, SEUPBs internal economist felt that it did not meet Green Book standard.
- The EA was issued to the Accountable Departments (AD) who identified 14 issues, 5 of which were serious.
- SEUPB felt that they could not stand over a sub-standard EA and so decided to undertake another.
- The second EA was negative and stopped at Need, SEUPBs internal economist agreed with the findings.
- The decision was not taken within the 28 week period due to the opportunities given to the Lead Partner to improve the application.

*The Chair thanked the JTS for their comments.*

A Review Panel Member asked what the five serious issues were.

The JTS stated that they were market failure; need; SMART objectives; options analysis; and funding splits.

The Chair clarified that the applicant was contesting on the grounds that they had provided information to the JTS and Economic Appraisers that was not presented to the SC. The NWRCBG agreed that this was the case.

The JTS noted that they recognised that information had been provided but that it was not sufficient, visitor numbers was provided as an example.

The Chair asked how the applicants arrived at the number of visitors and also referred to the issue around cost.

The NWRCBG stated that visitor numbers were an estimate based on sites that have visitor monitoring equipment. In terms of cost each of the councils in the area had carried out their own appraisals and were satisfied with the costs, by the time the applicant realised there was an issue with this they did not have enough time to respond sufficiently.

A Review Panel Member asked were the AD got the incorrect figures that they have referred to.

The JTS stated that these figures came from the original MAP application on which the AD had also made comments. While the JTS recognise that these did change they did not want to manipulate another departments information. The JTS confirmed that this did not impact on the decision.

A Review Panel member referred to the point that the assessment report has two scores for priority and theme, 13 and 10.

The JTS explained that this was an administrative error for which the JTS apologised. The JTS then confirmed that the correct score for this section was 10.

The Chair referred to the issue around the WRTP and letters of support from the councils and asked for clarification.

The JTS stated that the comment in relation to WRTP was an AD opinion. The JTS noted that the letters of support may not have been considered as the EA stopped at Need and therefore it may be that the letters were not relevant.

The Chair asked if the applicants had seen the second EA.

The NWRCBG stated that they had seen the EA and had issues with it. Positive comments were always followed by negative ones and the access agreements were presented negatively.

A Review Panel Member asked what impact the inaccessible 3km of a 46km trail would have on the project.

The NWRCBG noted that there would be no impact as there were links on this trail to other alternatives. The NWRCBG also noted that the EA stated that a 20km trail was completely inaccessible which is not the case.

A Review Panel Member noted that the access was classified as a significant risk to the project with few councils having a track record for asserting public rights of way.

The NWRCBG stated that the trails were selected with local knowledge, they tie in with what is already available and they have a wider appeal that includes canoeing and angling as well as walking. The statutory duty was not a concern.

A Review Panel Member asked if the applicant had looked at the land owner issue.

The NWRCBG stated that they had permissive agreements were access is needed. If a landowner is unamenable they are looking at asserting public rights of way.

The Chair referred to the final points on the presentation.

The NWRCBG noted that the positive aspect of these points was not alluded to.

The Chair referred to the point made by NITB, CAAN and Failte Ireland about linking with hubs.

The NWRCBG stated that they disagree with this point and that the project has tried to link with circular walks and all the trails are in proximity to some sort of settlement.

The JTS noted that they recognised that the project was trying to be strategic around hubs; however the assessment boils down to the economic benefits. NITB and CAAN should have been consulted and brought on board.

The NWRCBG noted that they have a good working relationship with both the NITB and CAAN and that they did forward their proposal to both before it was submitted to SEUPB.

The JTS recognised that the NITB were supportive and this was noted at the SC.

A Review Panel member referred to the mapping costs in the application and asked if the project were starting these from scratch or if they would commission Ordnance Survey.

The NWRCBG noted that they have their own system in place to develop maps of the area to the appropriate scales. Ordnance Survey have provided maps of the correct scale recently, however, this only covers some of the project area. The scale currently does not exist in the Republic of Ireland. The applicant also noted that Ordnance Survey would not necessarily develop the maps.

A Review Panel member referred to the sustainability score for the project and while recognising that there is absence of data that brought the score down it could have been potentially very high.

The JTS stated that the score for sustainability was 10 which is in the high end of the evident band. The JTS noted that sustainability looks at a variety of areas and while

the project scored highly in environmental it fell down on the financial aspect. The JTS also noted that the SC did not change the scores.

The NWRCBG stated that the councils will maintain the trails and have provided letters of support to say that they will cover maintenance costs.

The JTS noted that sustainability also looked at the social system and noted that the project was more recreational based than tourism based.

The NWRCBG noted that the market is primarily NI and ROI based and it is also supported by UK walkers. The NMWRCG added that it is not important where people come from as long as they visit, which also has a knock-on effect on the local economy.

The JTS recognise and agree with this but the JTS, AD and Economic Appraiser felt that although there were good ideas they needed to be extrapolated to be assessed.

The NWRCBG noted that they did provide evidence and thought that they had demonstrated the need for the project.

*The Chair then asked for final statements.*

The JTS stated that the main points were that the EA stopped at Need, the assessors needed more detailed and project specific information in terms of visitor numbers and economic benefit. The AD also have to be consulted and they have not changed their opinion. The JTS cannot bring a negative EA to SC with a recommendation for approval.

The NWRCBG stated that they felt the information presented to the SC was not complete and was inaccurate and felt that the project did not get a fair hearing. Information provided by the project to KPMG was not included. The 11 November 2010 was the submission date for the final EA yet the project was asked for information on 17 November which was not included in the assessment report presented to SC.

The Chair asked the Project promoters and the JTS if they were happy with the way the Review Panel had been conducted, and if they felt they had been given the opportunity to convey all the main points of their argument. Both the Project promoters and the JTS confirmed that they were happy with the process.

*The Project promoters and the JTS exited the room.*

The Review Panel discussed the application and information presented and noted:

- This was an interesting project.
- A letter of support is not a letter of offer and maintenance costs might not be covered.
- The visitor numbers seemed to be an unrealistic average; although with no real current evidence overall this was a good rough estimate.
- Clarification is needed on the information asked for on 17 November.
- There are a number of small inaccuracies and errors within the assessment which could have had an impact on the overall score.

The Review Panel concluded that clarification needed to be sought on the information that was supplied on 17 November 2010 before a decision could be taken.

## **5. Conclusion**

The Chair thanked the Review Panel members for attending and informed them that he would contact them with the clarifications required to allow for a final decision to be taken. He noted that when the decision was taken that that he would write, on behalf of the Review Panel, to inform both project applicants and the JTS. He also stated that the minutes from the meeting would be e-mailed to Review Panel members in due course for their approval.