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**Minutes of the
PEACE III Review Panel Meeting**

Wednesday 21 January 2009, 13:00
Ormeau Business Park, Belfast

In Attendance:	Pat Colgan	SEUPB	(Chair)
	Denis Galway	Panel Member	
	Paul Noonan	Panel Member	
	Niamh Kenny	Independent Panel Member	
	Lisa McMullan	SEUPB	(Secretariat)
	Christine Markey	SEUPB	(Secretariat)

1. Agree Agenda

The agenda was agreed.

2. Introductions

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Register of Interests/Conflicts of Interest

Denis Galway stated that he was a member of the Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group.

3. Reviews

The Review of the Creative Media Partnerships @ Community Visual Images: (000775).

Representatives from Creative Media Partnerships and the Consortium were invited to enter the room.

In Attendance:	Richard Summerville	Creative Media Partnerships
	Una Niceoin	Belfast City Council
	Tommy O'Reilly	Dee Street Community Centre
	Jim Dennison	Community Relations Council
	Emma Dargan	Community Relations Council

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

A representative for Creative Media Partnerships presented their case. The main points from this presentation included:

- Of the information sought by BDO Stoy Hayward in undertaking the Economic Appraisal 1/3 was clearly stated in the original application, including appendices submitted as part of the full application.
- All information requested was provided in a timely manner, as evidenced by email correspondence.
- Information on staff development costs had never been requested
- Information on marketing and publicity was clearly stated in Part B of the application.
- There had been a clear rationale for media equipment costs within the application.
- All information requested on programme costs had been supplied as evidenced in emails.

The Chair thanked the Project Promoters for outlining their points and invited the Consortium to respond.

A representative from the Consortium made the following points:

All procedures had been followed correctly and the application had not been treated any differently to any other.

An Economic Appraisal was required as a result of the initial assessment.

The Consortium were not involved during the Economic Appraisal process and were not aware of the questions being asked.

The Consortium received the final report and used the information contained within this to make their final assessment.

The Project was brought back to the Steering Committee and, based on the information presented in the Economic Appraisal regarding the uncertainty of costs; it was given a low score.

The overall score of 62 seemed artificially high. The application needed a minimum score of 65 in each of three core criteria. It fell down substantially in the area of efficiency and effectiveness.

The decision taken was based on the information provided by the applicant and the Economic Appraisal.

The Chair thanked the representatives from the Consortium for their comments and asked if the Review Panel had any questions.

A Review Panel Member asked about the requirement of the Economic Appraisers to go back to the applicant if they were not satisfied with the information they had received.

The Consortium stated that this Economic Appraisal was undertaken within a very tight timescale and it may not have been possible to go back to the applicant again.

The Chair asked if there was any evidence to show that information requested had not been received.

The Consortium stated that they had accepted the Economic Appraisal and had no reason to ask for evidence.

A Review Panel Member asked if the Consortium had asked any of their own questions.

The Consortium stated that the Economic Appraisal is undertaken to assist them with their recommendation and ultimately the Steering Committee makes the final decision. The Consortium noted that the Economic Appraisers are appointed for their expertise and if they are not satisfied, then that needs to be taken into account.

The Chair referred to the value for money element and stated that from looking at the application there appeared to be a detailed and itemised budget provided.

The Consortium stated that the Economic Appraisal had found some difficulty in relation to the programme costs and that there was uncertainty in relation to the applicant's rationale.

The Chair clarified that the project fell down on efficiency and effectiveness and value for money only.

The Consortium noted that as this was the case, the decision would have been based around the Economic Appraisal.

A Review Panel Member noted that the Economic Appraisal had presented a number of options and that truncating the project into two years would have increased the value for money. It was asked why this was not considered by the Consortium.

The Chair clarified that if an application fails in one of the core criteria then no other options are considered.

The Consortium stated that the Economic Appraisers were unable to verify how the costs were broken down and decision is based on that.

A Review Panel Member asked the Consortium if during their assessment they asked any questions of the Project applicants.

The Consortium replied that they relied only upon consultant appraiser's report and did not question promoters directly.

A Review Panel Member referred to pages 39-43 of the Economic Appraisal and asked if these issues had been addressed.

A Representative from Creative Media Partnerships noted that they had not seen the Economic Appraisal although they had requested a copy. A Representative from SEUPB clarified that they had received the request and had posted a copy to the applicant in December 2008 (confirmed date of posting, 18 December 2008). It was agreed to forward this again straight away.

The Chair clarified that the Consortium and the applicant are entitled to request any relevant information.

The Consortium highlighted the quick turn round period for the Economic Appraisal and noted that it would have not been possible to request any additional information.

The Chair then asked for final statements from both Project Promoters and the Consortium.

The Consortium took on board the comments that had been made in relation to the Economic Appraisal and noted that more discussion needed to be undertaken in relation to taking Economic Appraisals forward in a more coherent way. The Consortium then stated that they felt there was no failure in their procedures of assessing the application and highlighted that they would be more than happy to accept another bid when the theme re-opens.

The Project Promoters highlighted that a lot of work had gone into creating this project and a number of partners wanted it to go forward. They noted that even if it had to be truncated into a two year project that that would be better than doing nothing at all. They questioned the integrity of the Economic Appraisal and felt that this was the cause of the application receiving a significant reduction in marking. The Representative from Dee Street Community Centre highlighted their support for this project.

The Chair asked the Project applicants and Consortium 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 applicants and the Consortium confirmed that they were happy with the process.

The Project Promoters and the Consortium exited the room.

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

- The Economic Appraisal was not of a particularly high standard.

- Some of the answers to questions in the Economic Appraisal had clearly been demonstrated in the original application.

- The applicants had demonstrated that they had responded timely to requests for information from the Economic Appraisers.

- The Consortium had relied on the accuracy of the information presented in the Economic Appraisal.

- The Economic Appraisal process is integral to the decision making process, and any failings in it represent failings in the overall procedure.

The Review Panel concluded that there had been 'a failure in the adherence to procedures or systems that materially affected or could have affected the decision'.

The Review Panel agreed that the application should be reassessed with the applicant given the opportunity to answer the issues raised by the Economic Appraisal.

The Panel recommended that the Managing Authority work with the Consortium of Border Action and CRC, and the Joint Technical Secretariat, to consider how the efficiency and effectiveness of the Economic Appraisal process can be improved.

The Review of the Border Action – Implementation of the Partnership Principle under Theme 1.1 (000826)

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

In Attendance:	Paddy McGinn	Border Action
	Ruth Taillon	Border Action
	Howard Keery	JTS
	Eimear Murphy	JTS

The Chair outlined the procedures to be followed at the review meeting. The project applicants were then invited to present the reasons behind their request for a review.

A Representative from Border Action gave a presentation to the Panel. The main points were as follows:

- . The decision to assess the application under Area 1 instead of Area 2 involved no consultation with Border Action and therefore they had no opportunity to answer the specific questions relating to Area 1.
- . JTS's opinion that this should be funded from Technical Assistance, inappropriately and incorrectly influenced the scoring of the application.
- . The scores did not reflect the high quality of the application
- . Assessment comments suggested a lack of understanding of the proposal.

Significant weight was placed on the 'potential of duplication' whereas the application was designed to complement the work of the Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group and to provide added value.

This proposal was additional to the Consortiums 1.1 Contract with pre-contract negotiations removing any work involving research, therefore avoiding duplication.

Border Action felt that suggesting to undertake this proposal after the RPA process missed the point of the project.

The Chair thanked Border Action for outlining their points and invited the JTS to respond.

A Representative from JTS made the following points:

There is much less funding available under the PEACE III Programme and therefore the bar is higher than in previous programmes.

The application's score awarded, 53.5%, is considerably below the threshold of 65%. Throughout the assessment the application scored in the evident band and it needed to score in the very evident band to be above the threshold.

The Consortium already have a role in developing the Local Peace Action Plans within Theme 1.1.

With regard to assessing the project under Area 1, it was explained that Area 2 involved European and International networking and therefore it was deemed that the proposal would fit better under Area 1. The JTS stated that they considered that this did not disadvantage the applicant. Rather, if it had been assessed under Area 2, it is likely to have received a much lower score.

It was noted that the Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group would be likely to undertake similar work on a programme level and highlighted that the Draft Monitoring and Evaluation Plan stated that there would be ongoing evaluation of the Local Peace Action Plans.

In conclusion it is considered that some of the work in the proposal could be completed via the Contract with the Consortium and that there was a high risk of duplication with the work of the Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group.

The Chair thanked the representatives from the JTS for their comments and asked if the Review Panel had any questions.

The JTS were asked to clarify their role in screening potential proposals as it was felt that issues could have been flagged up before this proposal was so fully developed.

The JTS explained that this proposal arrived and was already fully worked up. As it passed all the basic eligibility criteria, the JTS had to follow formal procedures of assessing it and bringing it to Steering Committee for a decision.

A Border Action Representative raised the concern that there was an opinion that this proposal was not appropriate for programme funding and that therefore effected the scoring.

The Chair clarified Border Action's position, confirming that Border Action considered the assessment process was prejudiced because JTS felt it was not an appropriate application to the programme and this should have been communicated to Border Action.

A Border Action Representative referred back to an informal discussion that had taken place with members of SEUPB discussing this type of work, when Border Action were encouraged to apply under Theme 2.2.

The Chair stated that meetings that took place outside the formal assessment process could not be regarded.

A Review Panel Member asked at what stage the applicants had been told that the proposal would be assessed under Area 1.

The JTS confirmed that the applicant had not been made aware of this. It was explained that although there were two areas this was still one theme with one pot of money. It was highlighted that the answers were matched up to fit under

Area 1 and that it was felt that the information supplied was sufficient to answer the Area 1 questions without having to go back to the applicant.

The Border Action Representatives then asked why there was a need for two sets of questions. They noted that their proposal involved research and good practice which was specific to Area 2. They also noted that the learning from this research would be disseminated across the Member States and further.

The Chair referred to paragraph 4.34 of the Operational Programme and noted that while the Border Action application applied to part of this, there was a part that it did not fulfil.

The Border Action Representatives stated that they feel if they had been given the opportunity to answer the questions in relation to Area 1 then they would have benefited from a higher score.

A JTS Representative referred to the two sets of questions and stated that there could be a clear read across three of the questions but acknowledged that there was a difference between 2.8.2 and 2.8.6. It was stated, however that it was still the JTS's belief that this did not materially affect the final score.

A Review Panel Member asked, as no recruitment costs were involved, whether existing staff would be doing the research and what would they be doing if the project was not funded.

The Border Action Representatives stated that some staff would be seeking employment elsewhere.

A Review Panel Member referred to the Value for Money aspect, noting that the project costs seem particularly high.

The JTS stated that the Value for Money is not just based on the amount of money requested; it also deals with the organisations capability of doing what they have set out to do. As such it scored highly as the information was

presented very strongly and given the level of intensive staffing it was considered not unrealistic.

A Review Panel Member then referred to page 4 of the assessment report and stated that it was not clear what the specific grounds for duplication were.

The JTS stated that the Consortium have entered into a very significant contract worth approximately €2.8million for specific activities. The research part of that was stripped out at a cost of €270,000 and in this proposal it has come back as €550,000 which raised concerns for the JTS.

The Review Panel Member asked that if the research was stripped out of the Contract, how was there duplication with what is being proposed.

The Border Action Representative stated that the detail of the research had not been fully worked out at the time when it was stripped out of the Contract and that this proposal is not exactly the same piece of work.

The JTS referred to the fifth bullet point on page 4 of the assessment and noted that there were similarities with the application and the contract.

A Review Panel Member then asked if there was going to be an evaluation completed for each individual partnership within the scope of the evaluations that exist.

The JTS replied that they were not sure what exactly the evaluations entailed.

A Review Panel Member asked the extent of discussion that had taken place between Border Action and the Managing Authority in relation to this research.

The Chair stated that it was important to point out that the Monitoring and Evaluation responsibility lies with the Managing Authority and asked if a need for this research was established with the Managing Authority. The Chair also highlighted that although the Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group have not

yet discussed this type of research, that does not mean it is not a possibility in the future.

The Border Action Representative stated that no in-depth discussions had taken place with the Managing Authority but that some of the Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group Members felt this research would complement their work.

The Chair then asked for the final statements from the Project Promoter and the JTS.

Border Action noted that the 1.1 Contract in place with the Consortium discussed development work as a whole and that the information and workshops within the Contract were going to be different to what was proposed in the application. They also raised concerns about the lack of consultation.

The JTS noted that the applications underwent close scrutiny by the Steering Committee. It was noted that it would take a huge leap to bring the score above the threshold and re-iterated that reading across the questions of Area 2 to Area 1 did not disadvantage the application.

The Chair asked the Project Promoters and 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 Border Action and JTS representatives confirmed that they were happy with the process.

The Project Promoters and the JTS exited the room.

The Chair asked the Panel for their initial reactions to the Border Action project application.

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

The project appeared to be very expensive and Value for Money questionable.

It seemed virtually impossible for the application to rise above the threshold.

The JTS should have consulted Border Action when choosing to assess the application under Area 1 instead of Area 2. Communication between the applicant and JTS should be improved and any future projects in the same situation should be notified.

JTS believed they were making a positive gesture in assessing under Area 1

The timing of doing this research before RPA is useful.

If in the future there is a need for this type of research, encourage Border Action to apply but ensure there is discussion between the Managing Authority and the JTS.

The Review Panel concluded that, in light of the information provided and the arguments put forward, the Steering Committee's decision was not unreasonable. There was no evidence to indicate that the proper decision making procedure had not been followed, and the issues raised did not materially impact on the Steering Committee's decision.

The Panel did agree that JTS should have consulted with Border Action regarding the assessment of the application under Area 1 rather than Area 2. The Panel has therefore recommended that the Managing Authority work with the JTS to ensure improved and appropriate communication with applicant organisations during the assessment process.

5. Any Other Business

None.

6. Conclusion

The Chair thanked the Review Panel members for attending and informed them that he would write, on behalf of the Review Panel, to inform both project applicants and the Consortium and the JTS of the Review Panel's decisions. He

also stated that the minutes from the meeting would be e-mailed to Review Panel members in due course for their approval.