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

Thursday 5 March 2009, 14:15
SEUPB, Omagh

In Attendance:	Pat Colgan	SEUPB (Chair)
	John Anderson	Panel Member
	Denis Galway	Panel Member
	Delia Van Der Lenden	Independent Member
	Sarah Reid	SEUPB (Secretariat)
	Lisa Kelly	SEUPB (Secretariat)

1. Agree Agenda

The agenda was agreed.

2. Introductions

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

3. Register of Interests/Conflicts of Interest

None

4. Review

Cresco Trust – Roots and Wings Project (000393)

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

In Attendance:	Margaret Lee	Cresco Trust
	Dr Annette Begley	Cresco Trust
	Howard Keery	JTS
	Brenda Hegarty	JTS

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 Cresco Trust presented their case. The main points from this presentation included:

- . The concern was that there was a lack of written guidance for projects applying during the pipeline process.
- . There was no flow chart of the application process and no scheme of scoring made available to the project in comparison to other PEACE III projects.
- . Lack of Communication from SEUPB; other partners had more information.
- . Communication with Economic Appraisers (FPM) was initiated by Cresco Trust.
- . Entire process from initial stages to final decision took 18 months. This prolonged process put pressure on resources and in particular had an impact on Human Resources.
- . If a more clearly defined process had been made available to Cresco, a better use of resources would have been made.
- . Early eligibility issue; inability to meet criteria. SEUPB said that proposal didn't meet regional criteria. Regional impact never achievable but advised to re-apply.
- . Cresco questioned why they were allowed to proceed if the proposal application did not meet the threshold scores, and why two Economic Appraisals were carried out.
- . Cresco believe that there was no procedure in place to withdraw unsuitable applications at the early stages of the process.

Regional plans not published at outset, making it difficult to align their application with any Regional Plan.

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

A representative from JTS made the following points:

Measure 1.1 aims to Build Positive Relationships at the local level and address sectarianism and racism.

Measure 1.1 worth €140M of which €100M dedicated to the local councils. €40M to support a small number (10-15) strategic sectoral interventions at the regional level which adds value to the local plans.

Strategic is key sectoral interventions. E.g. Woman, Youth and Ex-Prisoner Projects.

Regional is defined as having significant reach and scope across the entire region and not pockets of local activity.

Cresco Trust wish to provide opportunities for women, young people and those in the diversity sector focusing on the target area of The Village, South Belfast, Derry and Donegal.

JTS discussed the Fit for the Programme and highlighted that one-off events which were proposed, limited the scope for achieving regional reach.

JTS also highlighted that there were concerns over value for money with high salary costs and high costs forecasted per participant.

Project scored 52.25% by JTS which was subsequently supported by the Steering Committee. Projects must score 65 and achieve “more evident” scores (13-16 bands) in areas of their application.

Cresco Trust scored in “evident” band for all scores which is 9-12.

JTS Assessment Report conclusion – whilst the proposal contained some attractive aspects, overall it lacked cohesion and appeared disparate.

JTS explained the scoring of the project application throughout each stage and concluded that;

- i) Project has scored evident across all key criteria (9-12). Needed to score more evident in some areas (13-16)
- ii) The project is not sufficiently strategic

- iii) Disparate group of activities
- iv) Nature of the activities – many one off/ one day activities limiting opportunities for genuine PEACE Building
- v) Concern that much of the proposed activity has a better fit with the Local Plans.

JTS defined the application process from the initial stages of the call for Expression of Interest; Shortlisting – Full Application – Economic Appraisal – JTS Assessment – Steering Committee decision. All aspects clearly adhered to. JTS also explained that the purpose of the pipeline process was to ensure that projects are preparing and that verbal guidance was given throughout this process.

JTS commented on the point Cresco had made on the lack of clarity around procedures. They stated that the Operational Programme which was not formally approved until November 2007 clearly identified the criteria around the scoring matrix and the Guidance Note clearly defined the process.

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

A Review Panel Member asked Cresco Trust if their complaint was about the fact that applicant was allowed to spend time and resource on the (eventually unsuccessful) application rather than on the scoring thereof.

Cresco Trust stated that they usually have access to a Scoring Matrix, they did have access to Operational Programme but it was incomplete. If they had access to a scoring scheme they could have made informed decisions from the outset.

The chair asked the project if they had access to the approved Operational Programme following its approval.

The JTS highlighted that the Operational Programme was approved November 2007 and was uploaded to SEUPB website and that projects were made aware of this.

The JTS also stated that the criteria for selection were embedded within the application form.

Cresco Trust stated that they never received a Scoring Matrix.

JTS explained that the scoring matrix is included in the Programme criteria – each area is specified in both the application form and also the assessment. The JTS also stated that the Call for Applications clearly specified the criteria.

A Review Panel Member asked if there was any feedback from the Economic Appraisal which the JTS commissioned in 2007 where the applicant could fine tune the second application.

The JTS confirmed that each project would be invited to review their application to make it more regional by engaging with their Appraiser. JTS confirmed that feedback was given by SEUPB and the Economic Appraisers to assist with Cresco Trust's revised application.

A representative from Cresco Trust stated that the Economic Appraisers liaised closely with them when preparing the first appraisal and had asked the project to explain the process. The application process started in 2007. Between the period January and May 2008 there was a long delay when there was no communication with SEUPB, only between Cresco Trust and the Appraisers.

The JTS stated that the Economic Appraisers were clear on their role.

The Chair asked the JTS to talk through the timeline of the application process.

A member of the JTS proceeded by explaining the timeline of the process from the initial stages in July 2007 through to December 2008 when the second revised application was presented to the Steering Committee.

- The pipeline process opened in July 2007;
- In August 2007, Cresco Trust were notified that they were shortlisted as part of the pipeline process and asked to work up a full proposal;
- SEUPB went out to tender for consultants to complete Economic Appraisals in December 2007.
- FPM Consultants were appointed to carry out an EA for the Cresco Trust 10 December 2007;
- A draft report from FPM was received by SEUPB on 14 January 2008;
- The application was assessed by JTS in February 2008, in advance of presentation to the Steering Committee;
- Application was presented to Steering Committee with findings from the Economic Appraisal in April 2008;
- On 6 May, the Cresco Trust was informed by JTS regarding the lack of regional reach in the application. FPM was also written to;
- On 16 May, SEUPB held a meeting with the project to discuss feedback from their application and the Steering Committee meeting;
- On 16 July, the project informed JTS that they were working on a Part B application;
- On 11 August, SEUPB received a Part B application from the project;
- On 1 Sept, SEUPB invite FPM to quote for second EA;
- On 2 Sept, SEUPB received a revised quote from FPM;
- On 9 October, SEUPB advised FPM to carry out a second EA;
- On 24 November, SEUPB received a second EA from FPM;
- On 11 December, project application and second EA presented to the Steering Committee.

Cresco Trust agreed with the timeline.

A member of the Review Panel ask was there an issue with having the guidelines as verbal only and not written down.

The JTS explained that the Operational Programme (OP) was in draft at the time of the pipeline process, and the call made was based on the draft document. Due to the sensitivity of the OP, the call for application and the criteria which was set out was consistent, although not formal under Theme 1.1. JTS also explained that the pipeline process was less formal in structure with a simple format of a two page expression of interest to enable shortlisting.

Cresco Trust explained that there were a number of stages when the application could have been rejected. This suggested to them that there wasn't a process in place, CT were encouraged to re-apply although they explained that in hind sight they did not receive clear guidelines and no access to Local Action Plans.

The Chair asked the project to confirm when they felt that their application would not succeed.

The project explained that they were never informed of this until the release of the scoring. The project highlighted that the lack of regionality issue had been identified by both the Economic Appraisers and SEUPB. The project stated that they were not questioning the decision to reject the application and recognised that it was not regional enough; they were questioning why they were allowed to continue in the process.

The JTS explained that the scores from the application were evident rather than highly evident; SEUPB indicated there were concerns over the Regionality of the project.

The JTS stated that they understand the effort put in by Cresco Trust throughout the application process. They noted that there is a clear, consistent process in place for every project application. There were no obvious gaps as highlighted by the timeline.

A member of the Review Panel asked JTS to confirm that in April 2008, Cresco Trust were informed that more work was needed to be carried out around the

area of Regionality and Value for Money, therefore given the opportunity to strengthen their application.

The JTS confirmed that a letter was sent to Cresco Trust on 06 May 2007 to meet with JTS.

A member of the Review panel asked if the Guidance note on 'Project Selection' was made available to projects.

The JTS confirmed this and stated that it was available on the SEUPB website.

Cresco Trust disagreed saying they had not been made aware of these guidelines but accepted that this may have been on the website but did not go looking for them.

A member of the Review Panel then asked if the Economic Appraisers were aware of the Guidelines.

The JTS confirmed that the Economic Appraisers were aware of the Guidelines.

The Chair asked Cresco Trust to confirm that they were appealing on the basis of procedure and also confirm that they feel that they should have been given a clearer indication that their project wasn't strong enough.

Cresco Trust confirmed this.

JTS stated that the Steering Committee did not feel that there was sufficient evidence to reject the project application at this stage.

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

None were made.

The JTS made timeline available to the panel if necessary.

The Chair asked the Project applicants 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 applicants and the JTS confirmed that they were content with the process.

The Project Promoters and the JTS exited the room.

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

- The project appeal was mis-directed.

- A small issue with procedures - one panel member has concerns as to whether verbal procedures were consistent.

- Grounds for different perceptions between the JTS and Cresco Trust.

- Cresco Trust accepted that their application was weak throughout the process.

- Cresco Trust accepts the decision that the project is not a fundamental Regional Strategic project.

The Review Panel concluded that the grounds on which Cresco Trust had made the appeal i.e. that there was 'a failure in adherence to procedures or systems' did not materially affect the decision and that the decision made by the Steering Committee to reject the application be upheld.

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 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.