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**Minutes of the  
Stage One INTERREG VA Review Panel Meeting**

Tuesday 26 April 2016, 10.00am

SEUPB Offices, Belfast

**Project Applicant** – Derry-Londonderry and Strabane District Council

**Project Title** – *Recovery of Protected Habitats and Priority Species*

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In Attendance:	Gina McIntyre	SEUPB (Chair)
	Sean Cronin	MC Panel Member
	Bob Harper	MC Panel Member
	John Maxwell	MC Panel Member (via TC)
	Philip Graham	Independent Member
	Sarah Reid	SEUPB (Secretariat)

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**1. Introductions**

The Chair welcomed Members to the Review Panel meeting of the INTERREG VA 2014 – 2020 Programme and explained the Review Procedure.

**2. Agenda**

Members agreed the agenda.

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

No Conflicts of Interest were declared.

#### **4. Review**

The Chair reminded the panel that the applicant has requested a review on the grounds that; “the outcome was a decision that no reasonable person would have made on the basis of the information provided to the Steering Committee”.

The Chair drew Members’ attention to the formal correspondence between the applicant and the Joint Secretariat (JS), neither of which attend today’s Review Panel meeting.

The Chair confirmed that in line with the Review Procedure, the panel can only consider information which had been originally provided in the application – no new information can be considered.

The project was assessed under five application Scoring Criterion, each of which contains a required threshold score of 3. Following assessment and steering committee consideration, the application failed to score the minimum under three of the criteria, namely;

- Criteria 2 - Quality of Project Design;
- Criteria 3 – Quality of cross-border cooperation with demonstrable added value; and
- Criteria 4 - Quality of the Project Team and Implementation Arrangements.

In advance of providing comment on the three criteria above, the panel noted the following observations in relation to the scoring achieved under Criteria 1(3) and Criteria 5(3).

In relation to the score of 3 awarded to Criteria 1 – Contribution of the project to the defined results and outputs of the programme, the Panel agreed that there was sufficient information provided to award this score.

In relation to the score of 3 to Criteria 5 – Value for money, the agreed with the award of 3 and made the following additional observations;

- It appeared that the applicant had used previous experience in managing projects to produce the information for this section rather than being specific to this application;
- The overheads required re-costing as the project expenses appeared to be over-estimated;
- There was insufficient consideration of the potential financial and resource costs of procurement.

In relation to Criteria 2 – *Quality of project design*, the panel agreed with the score of 2 as recommended by the Joint Secretariat report, and awarded by the Steering Committee and in reviewing the application form and assessment report made the following additional observations;

- The application contains objectives which are end goals and not tasks with little explanation on how they will be achieved;
- Some of the information provided mirrored the call information and was not fully explained;
- No information was provided in relation to whether privately owned land had been secured for project use;
- The design did not outline the procurement steps and the potential delays this may cause to project implementation;
- It was not clear from the application whether there had been a project design meeting with all stakeholders involved; and
- It was unclear who the beneficiaries were and how they would be targeted.

In relation to Criteria 3 – *Cross-border cooperation with demonstrable added value*, the panel agreed with the score of 2 as recommended by the Joint Secretariat report, and awarded by the Steering Committee and in reviewing the application form and assessment report made the following additional observations;

- There was no real evidence of the contribution of project stakeholders, whilst there is a mention of meetings being held, there is no information on the outcomes of the meetings;
- There was no reference to academic/research work already being carried out in this area and how the project would complement this work;

- The application did not meet the ‘joint staffing’ requirement as it appeared to be ‘top heavy’ in terms of Derry-Londonderry & Strabane DC with only one engagement officer planned for Donegal;
- Whilst the budget breakdown suggests that 70% will be spent in Donegal, there is no mention of procuring sub-contractors from Ireland.

In relation to Criteria 4 - *Quality of the Project Team and Implementation Arrangements*, the panel agreed with the score of 2 as recommended by the Joint Secretariat report, and awarded by the Steering Committee and in reviewing the application form and assessment report made the following additional observations;

- The application does not reference any engagement with research/strategy institutions which may be carrying out similar work;
- There was limited information on volunteers including whether a volunteer organisation would be utilised and how they would be trained;
- It was appreciated that the applicants had experience in managing previous projects and budgets and whilst the Lough’s Agency, as project partner, had extensive experience in Hydrology, the proposal required mention of nominated expertise in the Habitats/Birds Directive;
- The project’s partnership arrangements were not clear in terms of who would supply what expertise.

**The panel agreed that based on the information presented to the Steering Committee and that presented to the Review Panel, the decision of the Steering Committee was not unreasonable and therefore should be upheld**

Following the decision, the Review Panel noted that the reasons for the project being rejected were not in the Steering Committee minutes and requested that the Joint Secretariat consider including these, based on the assessment report, in future meetings.

The Chair thanked the Panel for their participation and closed the meeting.