

Minutes of the Twelfth Meeting of the Construction Sector Group

22nd April 2021



Conference Call

Present

David Moloney (Chair), PJ Rudden (Chair of Innovation and Digital Adoption Sub-Group) Sarah Ingle (ACEI), David Duffy (BMF/IBEC), Tom Parlon (CIF), Frank Kelly (CIF), Shane Dempsey (CIF), Caroline Spillane (Engineers Ireland), Declan McGee (Enterprise Ireland), Neil Kerrigan (Enterprise Ireland), Kathryn Meghan (RIAI), Orla Purcell (IPI), Micheál Mahon (SCSI), Patrick King (SCSI), Conor McCarthy (ACEI), Patricia King (ICTU), Alan Power (DETE), Hubert Loftus (DES), Valerie Kirwan (DES), Phil O'Flaherty (DFHERIS), Jim Curran (HSE), Kevin O'Donoghue (DECC), David O'Brien (OGP), Niall Cussen (OPR), Maria Graham (DHLGH), Sarah Neary (DHLGH), Paul Hogan (DHLGH), Owen Joyce (DFINANCE), Gerard McGuinness (DFINANCE), John Shaw (DTAOIS), Maria O'Brien (DHEALTH), John Coppinger (DTRANS), Tony Sheppard (DEDUCATION), Ronnie Downes (DPER), Kevin Meaney (DPER), Fionn Jenkinson (DPER), Margaret O'Donnell (DPER), Aine Griffin (DPER), Eoin Dignam (DPER), Colm Farrell (DPER), Rinku Phulphagar (DPER), Christina Mohan (DPER), Justin Wallace (DPER).

1. Minutes of meeting held on 25th February 2021

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed. All of the actions arising from the last meeting have been progressed.

2. Update from Innovation Sub-Group (Chair of Group)

The Chair of the CSG Innovation and Adoption Subgroup presented on the current structure of the subgroup as well as its proposed future governance. Recent progress has included DPER leading the selection of an emerging preferred bidder for grant funding of the Build Digital Project and Enterprise Ireland engaging EY to carry out a Detailed Description of Needs for a construction technology centre. The Chair of the CSG Innovation and Adoption Subgroup also mentioned recent meetings with government departments, sustainability/climate action and strategic communications.

ACEI said that their final report on available funding streams will be completed soon and that it was important for the group to keep focus on funding challenges, particularly for SMEs. It was noted that a significant number of SMEs still do not know about BIM. RIAI said that they would share the recently launched Sustainability Pathways document with the group.

ICTU said that the impending Climate Action Bill is likely to require significant construction industry reform. DPER suggested dedicating a future CSG meeting to discussing climate action.

Action Point

- RIAI to share Sustainability Pathways document with the group.

3. Industry Promotion of Careers (CIF and Engineers Ireland)

CIF

CIF presented on promoting careers in construction and driving the skills agenda. CIF covered its online platforms, TY work experience programmes, and apprenticeships/traineeships. CIF also presented on careers exhibitions, building equality and diversity, and collaboration.

Engineers Ireland

Engineers Ireland gave a summary of initiatives in support of a joined-up approach by all stakeholders to improve the image of the construction sector. Topics covered included sustainability actions, research and collaboration, policy activities and student engagement.

4. Reform of Planning (DHLGH and OPR)

DHLGH

DHLGH presented on an overview of the planning system, covering planning trends in Ireland and also foreshore/marine planning. A growth in the number of judicial reviews, particularly around environmental issues, was noted. DHLGH also covered several reform areas, including legislation, court cases, policy frameworks and guidance, training and the digital agenda.

OPR

OPR (Office of the Planning Regulator) presented on the functions of the OPR, which include assessing spatial plans and themes, reviewing planning authorities' systems and procedures, providing training and raising awareness of planning issues. OPR said that, in building on the strengths of the Irish planning system, focus should be on systems and capacity rather than legislation.

In the discussion that followed, RIAI asked would there be any extension to SI 30/2018. DHLGH answered that it is being considered. CIF asked about the timeline for judicial review reform. DHLGH hopes that a general scheme will be brought to government this summer. SCSi warned that increased density requirements in local development plans is making some sites no longer viable.

5. Update from National Investment Office (NIO)

DPER gave an update on the recently published Phase 1 Report of the NDP Review. DPER noted that capital expenditure is now at its highest level in the history of the state. DPER summarized departmental submissions and the results of the recent Review to Renew consultation process. DPER also covered the ongoing plans for the Phase 2 process.

On the Build Digital Grant Call, DPER said that an emerging preferred bidder has been selected, the Build Digital Alliance led by TU Dublin.

CIF said that there should be further stakeholder engagement ahead of Phase 2 of the NDP. DPER welcomed further engagement from stakeholders and noted that it would be an element of the National Investment Office's upcoming annual conference.

6. AOB

OGP gave a brief update on Professional Indemnity Insurance. OGP is in the process of finalizing PPI guidance following recent engagement with a number of stakeholders on the issue. Engineers Ireland said it was crucial that this issue stays on the CSG's agenda.

CIF noted a massive increase in the cost of building materials like steel and timber and a reduction in supply, and highlighted that this was outside the control of the construction industry.