



Construction Sector Group

Meeting 23 - 11am on 18th April 2024

TK Whitaker Room, Government Buildings, Upper Merrion Street, D02 R583

Present: David Moloney (Chair), Kevin Meaney, Colm Farrell, Conor Duffy, Declan Donoghue (all PENDR), PJ Rudden (Chair of Innovation and Digital Adoption Sub-Group), Patrick O'Brien, Patrick Wholohan (D/Finance), Hubert Fitzpatrick, Paul Sheridan (CIF), Kevin James (SCSI), David O'Brien (OGP), Sean Armstrong, Eugene Waters (DHLGH), Eileen Hearne (D/Taoiseach), Eamonn Quinn, Aonraid Dunne (D/Health), Aidan Sweeney, David Howard (BMF), Geraldine Larkin, Martin Searson (NSAI), Damien Owens (Engineers Ireland), Anne-Marie Conibear, Shane Dempsey (ACEI), Kathryn Meghen, Pranash Ramanundh (RIAI), Hubert Loftus, Mark Kelly (D/Education), Mairéad Kenny (IPI), Jonathan Patchell, Marc McEntegart (DETE), Damien Henahan (DFHERIS), Peter Smyth, Brian O'Connell (HSE), Ciaran O'Connor (OPW), Matthew McAleese (FCC)

Apologies: Seán O'Leary (IPI), Paul Cotter (D/FIN), Shirley Coulter, Patrick King (SCSI), Sarah Miley (DFHERIS), Neil Kerrigan (Enterprise Ireland)

Minutes

1. Minutes of meeting of 25th January 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 25th January 2024 were agreed.

2. Standing Item: Update on the Innovation and Digital Adoption Sub-Group (Sub-Group Chair)

In terms of Action 2 (Sustainability), the 'Supporting the Circular Economy Transition in the Irish Construction Sector' has been finalised and DECC are making arrangements for publication. Priority Action 3 (MMC) - the percentage of MMC adoption within the industry is relatively low but increasing with various government initiatives underway. The NSAI noted concerns around the quality of applications for Agrément certification. A decision is due on the MMC Demo Park planning application today. Priority Action 4 (Construct Innovate (CI)) - 68 companies are now fully on-boarded with the project, and the LDA has become the first patron of CI. Commencement of Work-Ready Graduate programme in September 2024 will see 15 graduates placed in member companies for 12 months, with support, training and mentorship provided by CI. CI is running a webinar series together with Engineers Ireland which has a strong following. CI Seed Fund Call launched on 2nd April 2024 and will run until 31st May 2024 with up to €50,000 available for industry-led collaborative research projects.

Priority Action 5 (Skillnet) – is currently being refreshed. Trish Flanagan, an Executive for Education & Skills in the CIF has taken on the role of Action Leader for Skillnet from 8th April 2024, replacing Liz Carroll. Priority Action 6 (ePlanning) - this action is progressing but at a slower pace than expected. 27 of the 31 LAs are now live on the national planning portal. Wexford and DCC are expected to go live in Q2 2024, followed by Cork City and Cork County in Q3 2024. Priority Action 7 (Build Digital) - the Service Level Agreement (SLA) between TU Dublin and Grangegorman Development Agency (GDA) has been signed. The Build Digital Project (BDP) with the support of the GDA will continue to produce guidance and templates to assist the OGP with the continued rollout of the public sector BIM mandate. Discussion followed around how we can expedite the delivery of NDP projects through MMC. DHLGH noted the Accelerated Delivery Programme for Social Housing which will see 13 LAs deliver 1,500 units across 34 sites using MMC/Design and Build Contracts. Six Regional Frameworks for Design & Build contractors using MMC are currently being put in place. Social Housing PPP Bundles 4 & 5 (1,500 units) are suitable for MMC construction and are expected to be tendered early in 2025.



Two pilot 3D (volumetric) MMC Projects in Carlow and Wexford will be delivered in 2025. DHLGH has published [standardised layouts for use with MMC](#) and an [MMC introductory guide](#).

3. Planning and Development Bill and resourcing the planning system

DHLGH gave an overview of the Planning and Development Bill. The Bill commenced in the Dáil on 30th November 2023 and has now accrued 120 hours of debate over 8 weeks to date with approximately 1,200 committee stage amendments also. DHLGH expect the bill to be enacted in Q3 2024, subject to progression through the Oireachtas. Some key measures of the Bill include the alignment of plans with the National Planning Framework (NPF) and census cycle, moving from six to 10 year development plans and specific local plans. Classes of exempted development are to be set out in Regulations. The Bill also includes details of mandatory timelines across all consenting processes. 18 weeks is the proposed new timeline for a Normal Planning Appeal and 48 weeks for a Strategic Infrastructure Development. In terms of resourcing, An Bord Pleanála (ABP) has 262 staff as of end March 2024 with sanction for greater than 300. A discussion followed on the scale of fees. CIF noted that a cap on fees may speed up the planning process. DHLGH stated that DECC has been engaging with their UK counterparts who have implemented such caps on fees. The IPI also raised the issue of resources in the planning system. Senior planners are stating they cannot get adequate levels of staff. DHLGH stated that it is working with DHFERIS on attracting individuals into the planning system.

4. NDP Delivery at Local Authority Level (Fingal County Council)

Matthew McAleese, Director of Planning and Strategic Infrastructure in Fingal County Council (FCC) gave an update on NDP delivery in Fingal. FCC has a €1.35 billion capital programme for 2024-2026 with housing the area with most funding allocated at €860 million. Some of FCC's key objectives is to provide 16,400 housing units and ensure the delivery of MetroLink in line with its Development Plan for 2023 to 2029. An oral hearing has concluded on MetroLink and is awaiting a decision by ABP. As of Q3 2023, the four Dublin LAs had granted planning permission for almost 84,000 residential units. Over 58,000 of these permitted units had not yet commenced as of Q3 2023. FCC is embracing a clustered growth model of economic development and seeking to concentrate population and job growth in certain areas which will bring benefits such as lowering carbon emissions.

5. Standing Item: Update on Project Ireland 2040 (NIO)

The NIO provided an update on the recent additional capital allocation of €2.25 billion under the NDP. Many critical sectors will now have an enhanced allocation to 2026. The Project Ireland 2040 Delivery Board met on 10th April. The main focus areas of the group were cost cutting, planning and skilled labour force. The CSG Sub-Group also met on the 10th April. Further training is planned on the Infrastructure Guidelines this month. MPAG conducted a review of the Water Supply Project and Enterprise Fleet Replacement Project which were completed in Q1 2024. The Project Ireland 2040 capital tracker and map are planned for publication in the coming weeks. The Build 2024 Report is currently being finalised and is expected to be published by end Q2 2024.

AOB: The RIAI raised a number of issues currently faced by architects, including the timelines of some projects which are facing difficulty advancing. Issues related to procurement, inflation and BIM and MMC adoption were also raised. The RIAI referred to delays in MMC certification whilst acknowledging the need for greater understanding of BIM and MMC. Shane Dempsey (ACEI) introduced the new President of the ACEI, Anne-Marie Conibear.

Action Point: 1. It was agreed that the next meeting would include an agenda item for the representative bodies under the Construction Industry Council (CIC) to give an update to the CSG.

The next meeting will be held on 11th July 2024 at 11am (in-person only).