

Minutes of the first Meeting of the Construction Sector Group



31st July 2018

In Attendance

Robert Watt DPER (Chair), John Shaw (D/Taoiseach), Harry Harris (D/Health), Hubert Loftus (DES), Dave Walsh (DHPLG), Ray O’Leary (DTTAS), Jim Curran (HSE), David O’Brien (OGP), Ger Harvey (OPW), Sarah Ingle (ACEI), David Duffy (BMF), Tom Parlon (CIF), Caroline Spillane (Engineers Ireland), Patricia King (ICTU), Orla Purcell (IPI), Kathryn Meghen (RIAI), Áine Myler (SCSI), Ronnie Downes (DPER), Ed Hearne (DPER), Fionn Jenkinson (DPER), Christina Mohan (DPER), Kevin Daly (Head of the Secretariat for the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, Item 4), Tony Donohoe (Chair of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, Item 4), Matt Collins (DCCAIE).

1. Introductions and remit of the CSG

The NDP announced the establishment of the CSG to promote regular and open dialogue between the public sector and key segments of the construction industry. DPER explained that the core role of the CSG is to assist in enabling the successful delivery of the NDP in a timely fashion and on a value-for-money basis while responding to the needs and advice of the members of CSG.

DPER noted that a work programme will be developed to set the agenda and that the intention is that the group will meet on a quarterly basis. It was noted that the CSG is well placed to look at the broad agenda as it brings together a wide ranging group of key public and private representatives.

2. Developing the Capital Tracker

Responding to calls from the construction sector for greater transparency and the need for information to aid planning, DPER intends to improve visibility on capital projects and programmes and explained that work is taking place on developing a detailed tracker tool for monitoring the implementation of the NDP. The first version of the tracker was published in September 2017 and the next version is due to be published in September 2018. DPER noted that this version will be a more dynamic and sortable format and will increase transparency, thereby facilitating better information, communication and sequencing.

While the forthcoming version of the tracker represents a substantial improvement on the first version, it is planned to steadily improve the level of detail available in the near-term. This will include incorporating the investment plans of commercial semi-states and providing more detailed project-level information on phasing, funding and project KPIs.

Action point:

- DPER to circulate the capital tracker upon completion to the group for views and feedback.

3. Developing a work programme for the CSG

DPER began by noting that the proposed work programme will consist of two core elements: new work developed under the aegis of the group and the coordination and communication of relevant work by other Departments and Agencies. In addition the group was invited to suggest other work items.

In terms of potential projects, DPER acknowledged that issues exist around productivity and that work needs to be done to benchmark industry performance, consider best practice policy approaches, understand actions required by industry and focus on implementation. Members of the Group pointed to a range of potential policy approaches and instances of best practice from other countries.

Action Points:

- DPER to commence work on a Construction Sector Activity Report
- DPER to revert back to the group with a proposed work schedule which takes into account the suggestions of the group.
- DHPLG to update on work on judicial review and planning process at the next meeting of the group.

4. Upcoming work on skills in the construction sector (Expert Group on Future Skills Needs)

As an example of the work ongoing across Departments and Agencies, the Chair and the Head of the Secretariat of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs discussed their group's background and work for the coming period. The large number of reports already produced on construction sector skills was noted and in light of this the EGFSN is currently scoping out a piece of research to be carried out in the first half of 2019 on skills issues in the construction sector.

The Group discussed the mode of delivery of apprenticeship training including the length of time taken to complete the typical apprenticeship in the trades. The discussion highlighted the need for a balanced and thoughtful approach in considering innovative and efficient modes of delivery while upholding professional rigour and industry standards.

Attention was drawn to the fact that the pipeline of engineers, particularly civil engineers, has significantly decreased in the last number of years. Acknowledging that there are evident skills deficits across the wider sector, it was agreed that there is a real requirement to look at the different causal factors including diversity issues and under-representation of women in the sector. All supported the idea that a message needs to get out around the potential for school-leavers and graduates to pursue fulfilling careers in the construction sector and that such occupations are a sustainable career choice.

Action point:

- EGFSN to advance the research project and update the CSG as relevant.
- Industry members to provide EGFSN with relevant reports, studies and expertise.
- The views of the CSG regarding positive messaging on construction-related skills and careers to be conveyed to D/Education & Skills for response.

5. Building waste disposal issues

DCCAE gave a presentation on Construction and Demolition Waste Matters, setting out work carried out in recent years, challenges now being faced in the sector and the processes which are underway in order to alleviate the risks which are becoming apparent. The way forward will involve action by both the private sector and public sector bodies.

Concerns were highlighted regarding procedures and costs arising.

The group noted that they are happy to engage with the Waste Resource Group and to work together on reducing the dependence on export markets.

6. AOB/Next Meeting

The next meeting will be arranged for Q4.