

Minutes of the seventh Meeting of the Construction Sector Group

22nd May 2020



Conference Call

Present

Robert Watt (Chair, DPER), David Howard (BMF/IBEC), Tom Parlon (CIF), Pat Lucey (CIF), Shane Dempsey (CIF), Caroline Spillane (Engineers Ireland), Patricia King (ICTU), Orla Purcell (IPI), Conor Norton (IPI), Kathryn Meghen (RIAI), Micheál Mahon (SCSI), Shirley Coulter (SCSI), Kevin Daly (DBEI), Alan Power (DBEI), Stephen Curran (DBEI), Philip Nugent (DCCAE), Hubert Loftus (DES), Valerie Kirwan (DES), Trudy Duffy (DES), David Bolger (DHEALTH), Nason Fallon (DHPLG), Ray O'Leary (DTTS), John Shaw (DoT), George Burke (DoT), Gerard McGuinness (DFINANCE), Ronnie Downes (DPER), Gearoid O'Keeffe (DPER), Paddy Howard (DPER), Graham Rigney (DPER), Áine Griffin (DPER), Sinéad O'Donnell (DPER), Ciara Morgan (DPER), Eoin Dignam (DPER), Margaret O'Donnell (DPER), Fionn Jenkinson (DPER), Christina Mohan (DPER), Sharon McGuinness (HSA - Agenda Item 2); Mark Cullen (HSA - Agenda Item 2).

1. Minutes of meeting held on 22nd January 2020

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed. Due to the impact of Covid-19, work is ongoing on developing the timeline for the construction procurement review. Work is also continuing on the construction skills supply analysis.

Action Points

- OGP to finalise timeline for construction procurement review.
- DBEI to provide update on the construction skills supply analysis at the next meeting.

2. Return to Work Safety National Protocol (HSA)

The HSA provided an update on their work in relation to the Return to Work Protocol. With the implementation of phase 1, the HSA have received a number of queries and have also launched a series of inspections out on the ground in the last week. The HSA also noted that the CIF return to work protocols have been revised to reflect the National Protocol. The HSA are currently liaising with working representatives and are working on developing a checklist and further templates for protecting the health and safety of workers. The first oversight meeting of the Consultative Forum on the National Protocol has been scheduled for this afternoon. In summing up, the HSA acknowledged that the response from stakeholders has been very helpful.

3. Actions from Industry in light of Covid-19 (Industry)

Industry members provided a short overview on the impacts, actions and next steps in light of Covid-19 on each of their respective organisations.

IPI – The main points raised included ensuring continuity between public and private sector is balanced in terms of health and safety and supporting investment and continued backing of the NPF and Project Ireland 2040. The IPI also reflected on the importance of local and regional development, the role of Local Authorities and the necessity of having tools available to unlock potential.

RIAI – The opportunities for industry to diversify and accelerate were highlighted as important, with particular emphasis placed on the need to invest in digitalisation of planning and procurement systems, the revitalising of towns and villages and thus providing stimulus to SMEs. Concerns about the future pipeline of work and the growing problem of PPI as a result of less capacity in sector were also raised. On the future pipeline of projects, DPER noted that Departments have drawn up initial lists of priority projects and identified particular projects that could function as economic stimulants.

BMF – BMF pointed that some manufactures are dependent on the availability and ability to source PPE. BMF indicated that overall there has been a relatively limited impact on the supply of materials, in terms of the availability of Irish manufactures goods and imports from other European countries.

SCSI – With the return to work, SCSI are fearful of legal disputes arising and are actively working to promote alternative dispute resolution and trying to resolve them locally.

EI – EI is of the view that there is now real opportunities for upskilling, reskilling and promoting entry into the engineering profession. DPER agreed that if the pipeline of projects can be maintained, it would be a great opportunity for increasing numbers in the sector, particularly in light of probable declines in other sectors.

CIF – CIF explained that the current focus on sites is maintaining health and safety. The productivity impact is currently being assessed. The issue of costs was raised, as well as concerns that there is not the same level of engagement on public works contracts compared to the private sector. CIF noted that they would welcome a collaborative approach and an update from the OGP. The importance of having a pipeline of projects to sustain industry and to provide confidence to the market was reiterated. DPER recognised the importance of working across the system and projecting a positive message about work being there. The careers campaign is still very much on the agenda for CIF.

ACEI – ACEI were unavailable to attend as the association's AGM was taking place. On their behalf, EI stressed the importance of having a pipeline of projects available and indicated that members are ready and willing to engage in the stimulus programme. DPER reiterated the importance of identifying projects that could be moved along.

Action Points

- SCSI to engage with OGP re property dispute and resolution mechanisms.
- CIF to engage with DPER on issue of cost.

4. Update on Project Ireland 2040 and Building Innovation (DPER)

DPER provided an update on Project Ireland 2040 and the Building Innovation report. Communications have been ongoing with industry members and meetings have been continuing with the Project Ireland 2040 Delivery Board and Coordination Group to discuss and progress issues. In light of the impending formation of a new government, a lot of planning and preparation is happening for a review of the NDP. The proposed review will build on the existing evidence base, include consultations with Departments and stakeholders and the production of a report in advance of Budget 2021. DPER have identified fundamental questions to be included in the review based on five key areas: level of public investment; share of capital expenditure; policy priorities; spatial alignment; and, governance. The

Building Innovation report has been redrafted and will be launched in the next couple of weeks. Updates on actions to increase innovation and output in the sector will be sought from leaders in the Autumn.

Action Points

- DPER to draft up timelines for actions emerging and follow up with appropriate leaders.
- DPER to launch and publish Building Innovation report on DPER website.

5. National Centre of Excellence (DBEI)

DBEI provided an update on the ongoing work in relation to the National Centre of Excellence. Enterprise Ireland have agreed to take the lead and will engage and work with industry. The finer details including funding and governance still need to be ironed out. Industry members welcomed Enterprise Ireland's involvement and RIAI further suggested that Build Digital could fall within, so that there is one single entity.

Action Points

- DBEI to circulate timeline, next steps and details of process for establishment of National Centre of Excellence.
- RIAI to revert with further views on Build Digital.

6. AOB

Reference was made to the note on the CIRI legislation that was circulated in advance of the meeting. In relation to the careers campaign, CIF were advised to liaise with DES. In summing up, DPER noted that immediate consideration needs to be given to the means of enabling the ramping up of the number of spaces on training and apprenticeship programmes.

Action Points

- DPER to circulate information on developments relating to the Constructions Products Regulations on behalf of DHPLG following the meeting.
- DPER to revert with date for next CSG meeting.