

South-East Regional Authority
Údarás Réigiúnach an Oir-Dheiscirt

**Minutes of the April monthly meeting of the South-East Regional Authority
held at the Council Chamber, City Hall, Waterford, on Monday, 23rd April 2007
at 2.30 p.m.**

Present: Cllr. P. Coffey, Cathaoirleach, presided.

Also Present: Cllr. L. Allen, Cllr. M. Anglim, Cllr. T. Breathnach, Cllr. J. Brennan, Cllr. P. Codd, Cllr. J. Crowe, Cllr. S. Doyle, Cllr. M. Fitzgerald, Cllr. P. Fitzpatrick, Cllr. D. Geoghegan, Cllr. T. Howlin, Cllr. D. Hurley, Cllr. P.J. Kavanagh, Cllr. T. Kinsella, Cllr. D. Landy, Cllr. C. Long, Cllr. T. Maher, Cllr. A. McDonald, Cllr. D. Mac Partlin, Cllr. P. Norris, Cllr. S. Nyhan, Cllr. P. O'Callaghan, Cllr. M. O'Halloran, Cllr. W. Paton, Cllr. C. Phelan, Cllr. S. Ryan, Cllr. J. Tobin, Cllr. D. Walsh.

In Attendance: Mr. T. Byrne, Director
Mr. M. Moroney, European Officer
Ms. A. Sheehan, Office Manager
Ms. B. Maher, Research & Projects Executive
Mr. E. O'Connor, Designated County Manager.

Apologies: Cllr. M. Roche, Cllr. T. Wright.

The Cathaoirleach opened the meeting by welcoming the following:

- Mr. Edmond O'Connor, South Tipperary County Manager - new Designated County Manager in the South-East Region.
- Ms. Breda Maher - Research & Projects Executive with the Authority.

The following vote of sympathy was passed:

- To the Nolan family on the death of Cllr. Enda Nolan, Carlow County Council. The Cathaoirleach and members all wished to be associated with this vote of sympathy.

Confirmation of Minutes

On the proposal of Cllr. L. Allen, seconded by Cllr. T. Breathnach, the minutes of the March monthly meeting, copy of which had been circulated, were unanimously approved and signed by the Cathaoirleach.

Matters Arising

- A query was raised about concerns expressed by the members at the March meeting regarding the circulation of the Southern & Eastern Regional Assembly's Draft Policy on Rural Transport to all local authorities for consideration and observation. The Director confirmed that it had been circulated so that the views and opinions of all local authority representatives could be considered before the Report was finalised.

Presentation on Tourism in the South-East Region

Mr. Joe Palmer, General Manager – South-East, Fáilte Ireland and Mr. Gilbert Archdale, Tourism Transport Consultants, made presentations to the members on '*A 3-Year Strategic Plan to Grow Tourism in Ireland's South-East*'. Mr. Palmer addressed the members first on the following items:

- Key topics for Fáilte Ireland in addressing the 3-year plan
- How our visitor profile has changed in recent years
- Domestic revenue in the tourist industry to the South-East
- Overseas revenue in the tourist industry to the South-East
- Numbers of overseas holidaymakers to the South-East
- 2007 focus on key international markets
- The need to drive demand through ferryports and airports
- Details of modes of transport used by holidaymakers to the South-East
- The need to continue to drive the Irish tourist market
- New promotional aids for 2007 South-East campaign
- Activities engaged in 2005 by overseas visitors.

Mr. Gilbert Archdale from the Tourism Transport Consultants (TTC) then addressed the members and outlined the role of the TTC in delivering the 3-year strategic plan. He stated that the timescale for the delivery of the plan is approximately 3 months, the first draft of which should be available at the end of June 2007, finalised in September 2007, with the launch of the Strategy due in October/November 2007.

Mr. Palmer and Mr. Archdale then responded to questions and queries from the members including the following:

- Revenue and visitor numbers in the region compared to the rate of inflation
- Access to the region – promotion of airport and ports
- Lack of *'Irish Experience'* due to large amounts of non-nationals working in the tourist industry
- Quality of Irish hotels
- Promotion of marinas in the South-East region
- Ways of promoting the South-East region in order to encourage tourists into the region, e.g. low cost of petrol, drinkable water etc.

Mr. Palmer paid tribute to Cllr. D. Walsh for all his hard work in relation to twinning and promoting tourism in the South-East Region.

The Cathaoirleach thanked Mr. Palmer and Mr. Archdale for their very interesting and informative presentations and requested that the draft 3-year Strategic Plan be submitted to the Authority for information and consideration prior to publication.

National Climate Change Strategy 2007-2012

The members noted details of the Executive Summary of the National Climate Change Strategy recently published by the Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government, copy of which had been circulated. The report outlined the global challenges regarding climate change and the actions Ireland would be taking in order to meet these challenges.

Census 2006 : Principal Demographic Results

The members noted details of *'Census 2006 : Principal Demographic Results'* recently published by the Central Statistics Office, copy of which had been circulated. This report summarised changes in the demographic structure of the region and will have implications for local authorities and also for job creation, planning, industry etc. The members requested that this matter be discussed in more detail at a future Authority meeting.

'Bridging the Broadband Gap': Conference and Exhibition in Brussels

The Director informed that members that based on an open competition for European Broadband Projects, the Authority had been invited to take part in an upcoming Conference and Exhibition *'Bridging the Broadband Gap'*. This Conference will take place in Brussels on 14th/15th May 2007.

'ESTIIC' Project

The Director outlined details of the INTERREG IIC 'ESTIIC' Project, the objective of which is to provide fixed wireless access broadband infrastructure and services in the cities/towns in the South-East in which Metropolitan Area Networks have already been constructed.

'SERB-II Broadband Project'

The Director informed the members that the Authority is about to commence Phase II of the Regional Broadband Programme (SERB-II) with the construction of fibre-optic networks in the towns of Cahir, Cashel, Carrick-on-Suir, Tipperary and Thomastown and the provision of wireless broadband in the towns of Dunmore East, Tramore, Bagenalstown and Tullow . The contract for the work on the fibre-optic networks is to be signed shortly and it is anticipated that work on the project will commence in May.

National Primary Routes N.11 and N.24

The members noted details of a letter from the National Roads Authority, copy of which had been circulated, regarding the upgrading of the National Primary Routes N.11 and N.24.

The members expressed disappointment over the contents of this letter, stating their concerns regarding certain sections of the N.11 and lack of progress on the N.24.

Report on meeting with Dr. Jim Port

The Director informed the members that he and the Cathaoirleach had a very productive meeting with Dr. Jim Port, the external independent expert appointed by the Minister for Education & Science to examine and report on the application of Waterford Institute of Technology for designation as a University. He stated that Dr. Port was very well briefed on 3rd level education in Ireland and on the case of a university for the South-East. The Director and Cathaoirleach put the case of the Authority forward in accordance with the Resolution passed by the members in January 2006.

Cllr. W. Paton informed the members that the Governing Body of IT Carlow has considered initiating a Section 9 application to seek university status for the college. The members of the other constituent local authorities stated that this Section 9 application would be detrimental to the application of WIT and to the prospects of securing a university for the region.

The Director stated that Dr. Jim Port would issue a complete report on the application of WIT within a month which would be forwarded to the Minister for Education and Science for consideration.

Correspondence

- Letter from Eastern Regional Fisheries Board regarding their objections to Section 4 discharges in County Wexford.

The members expressed their dissatisfaction at the response from the Fisheries Board. They insisted that a representative from the Board attend a full meeting of Wexford County Council to discuss this issue. Cllr. P. Codd, Chairman of Wexford County Council, will endeavour to arrange this meeting.

Other Matters

- The Director informed the members that an invitation has been received for the Authority to undertake a study visit to Oporto, Northern Portugal in the context of the EU inter-regional collaboration and cooperation. The members accepted his recommendation that the Authority accept the invitation for a delegation of representatives to make the study visit which would include meetings with government officials and regional administrators. The proposed dates for the study visit are from 14th to 17th June 2007. The following members were nominated by the Authority to participate in the study visit:

Cllr. P. Coffey	Cllr. C. Long	Cllr. T. Maher
Cllr. M. Fitzgerald	Cllr. J. Tobin	Cllr. D. Geoghegan
Cllr. P. Codd	Cllr. S. Doyle	Cllr. D. Hurley
Cllr. P. O'Callaghan.		

That concluded the business of the meeting.

Síniithe: _____

Ceadaithe: _____

Dáta: _____

Dáta: _____