



Minutes of the 439th NESC Council Meeting, 17th December 2020 @ 10am (via WebEx)

The meeting took place virtually via Webex from the Department of the Taoiseach, Room 301.

Attendance: In room 308: Elizabeth Canavan (Chair), Online: Brid O'Brien, James Doorley, Sean Healy, Dave Hegarty (DBEI), Gearoid O'Keeffe (DPER), Denis Duggan, John Enright, TJ Flanagan, Michelle Norris, Paul Donnelly, Philip Hamell, Edgar Morgenroth, Eleanor Denny, Geraint Ellis, Feargal O' Coigligh (DHLG), Ian Talbot, Kevin Callinan, Patricia King, Maeve McElwee, Karen Ciesielski, Kate Ruddock, Matthew McCann (DoF) Rónán Hession (DEASP), Sinead O'Flanagan, and Oonagh Duggan,.

Secretariat: In room 308: Larry O'Connell, Online: Damian Thomas, Helen Johnston, Jeanne Moore, Noel Cahill, Edna Jordan, and Sinéad Nic Coitir NESC

Apologies: Orlaigh Quinn (Dave Hegarty attending), Derek Moran (Matthew McCann attending), John McKeon (Rónán Hession attending), Robert Watt (Gearoid O'Keeffe attending), Graham Doyle (Feargal O'Coigligh attending), and Tom Parlon.

- **Minutes of the Meeting September 2020**

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed without amendment.

- **Shared Island:** The Director presented a scoping paper which set out a proposed approach to NESC's work on the Shared Island Initiative. This presentation also included an overview of the three supporting papers on Economy, Good Jobs and Climate and Biodiversity. In a rich and informative discussion Council members articulated their support both for the Shared Island Initiative in general and the proposed approach to the NESC research project. In particular, Council members highlighted the following points:
 - It is welcome development that NESC has been asked to contribute to this important policy initiative.
 - Cross-border and cross-community work needs to be undertaken in a considered and sensitive manner.
 - It is important that dialogue, active listening, inclusive engagement and learning have been identified as central elements of this work.
 - There is a need to foster our understanding and awareness of different communities and diverse traditions.

While building relationships and fostering trust in a cross border context is a worthwhile exercise, this can be a protracted, slow and complex process.

- **Other work items.** The Council were provided updates on a number of projects, including
 - a. **Rural Change & Resilience:** The Council were provided with details of a planned roundtable to discuss two papers that NESC have commissioned which explore rural Ireland and its future resilience. Council members expressed their support for this proposed event; and,
 - b. **Digital Inclusion**—The Council reaffirmed their view that research on the digital inclusion was an important strand of work and it was agreed that a revised draft would be presented to Council at its next meeting.
 - c. **Vision & Recovery:** It was noted that work on this area had not been progressed but that it remains important to the work of the Council.
- **AOB:**

The next meeting will take place on Thursday, April 1st