



Taighde, Idirphlé, Comhairle

Research, Dialogue, Advice

Minutes of the 452nd NESC Council Meeting (in person), Thursday, 28th March 24 @ 10am
The Clock Tower, Department of Education, Marlborough Street, Dublin 1

Attendance: Liz Canavan (Chair), Owen Reidy, Chris Van Egeraat, Seamus Coffey, Jerry Mac Evilly, Caroline Whyte, Karen Ciesielski, Ian Talbot, Hubert Fitzpatrick, Colette Byrne, Colin Scott, Seán Healy, Nat O'Connor, Brid O'Brien, Nichola Mallon, Rónán Hession (DSP), Niamh Moore-Cherry, Gerard Brady, Diarmuid Torney, John Enright, TJ Flanagan, Noelle O'Connell, Kevin Daly (DoF), Robert Scott, (DPER), and Declan Hughes & Gary Tobin (DETE).

Secretariat: Larry O'Connell, Cathal FitzGerald, Niamh Garvey, Helen Johnston, Jeanne Moore, Damian Thomas, and David Hallihan.

Apologies: John Callinan, Damian McDonald, Kevin Callinan, John Hogan (Kevin Daly attended), Graham Doyle, and John McKeon (Rónán Hession attended) David Moloney (Robert Scott attended).

- 1. Administration.** The minutes of the posted December 2023 meeting were agreed.
- 2. Thriving Ireland:** Cathal FitzGerald introduced a paper '*Thriving Ireland: Hope and Action*' reflecting on learning from the NESC@50 programme of work and proposing potential projects to respond. Issues noted included being clearer on the audience for the paper; the value or limitations of framing the work around 'hope'; the balance of framing the paper on 'thriving, but' or placing more emphasis on challenges being experienced by many people; challenges for a proposed project focused on 'values'; discussion on the benefits or risks of a national conversation and in particular how to ensure such a conversation would be meaningful for participants at risk of being left behind; the importance of focusing on existing localised structures for engagement; being clearer on what the paper is seeking to achieve.
- 3. Better Work:** Damian Thomas introduced a paper '*Better Work: Benefits, Challenges and Strategic Actions*'. Discussion focused on the need to look at coherence with other recently published reports on this issue; greater clarity on the structures being proposed and their relationship with existing structures; the need to consider how to reflect how 'productivity' is shifting e.g. between sectors from construction to manufacturing, and consider what is missed by 'productivity' such as unpaid care work and opportunities around universal basic services or universal basic income; consider the title given the importance of unpaid work; more consideration of a sectoral perspective; consideration of those who are out of work and how to ensure better work for all not just those in existing employment; consideration of issues related to migrant workers; consideration of aging demographics; integration with the social welfare and policy system; the future of work in the context of AI; robotics; digitalisation and green transition as well as demographic change; addressing some out of date data; and reflecting on the different roles of government, business and workers in ensuring better work. More analysis on elements including pay & non-pay of better work will be carried out and the council will receive another version of the Better Work report at its June meeting.

Next meeting will take place on Thursday, 27th June 2024, at the Clock Tower, Marlborough Street.