



Minutes of the 400th NESC Council Meeting, 21st June 2013

The meeting took place in The Clock Tower, Department of Education, Marlborough St, D1, starting at 10 am.

Attendance: John Shaw (Chair), John McHale, Mary Daly, Caroline Fahey, Brid O'Brien, Seán Healy, Geraldine Tallon, Sean Ó Riáin, Ian Talbot, Danny McCoy, Michael Ewing, Siobhán Egan, Karin Dubsy, Edmond Connolly, Frank Allen, David Hegarty, Edgar Morgenroth, Tom Parlon, Seamus O'Donohoe, Micheál Leahane, Laura Burke, John Murphy, Manus O'Riordan, David Begg, Sally Anne Kinahan, Shay Cody, and Pat Smith.

Secretariat: Rory O'Donnell, Larry O'Connell, Anne-Marie McGauran, Jeanne Moore, Noel Cahill and Helen Johnston.

Apologies: Tony Donohoe, Anna Davies, Mary Walsh, Oisín Coghlan, Mike O'Sullivan, and Niamh O'Donoghue.

1. Minutes of the Meeting of May 2013 were approved.

2. Greening the Economy — Working Towards an Integrated View: Laura Burke, Director General of the EPA, outlined the agency's analysis of the sustainable development challenge (slides available). Jeanne Moore outlined the key points of the Secretariat's paper. Members felt that this was a step forward in locating the environmental dimension within economic and social policy and uncovering the challenges of integration in those areas that are uncontested and contested, respectively. If NESC could identify constructive new views on integration this could advance and refashion the framework for sustainable development. Members highlighted a number of issues and made a number of arguments. Among these were the need to refer to the limited environmental dimension in the reform of local government; the variable application of Strategic Environmental Assessment; the implications of a global perspective on agriculture and food supply; effective implementation, integration and monitoring of environmental policies and legislation; the importance of bottom-up as well as top-down approaches; the implications of increasing environmental taxes and reducing other taxes; and the possible development of satellite accounts. Some argued that sustainability (economic, social and environmental) should be the central motif of public policy. It was also argued that although we are now viewing economic, social and environmental issues in a more unified way, we have yet to identify whether, and where, there trade-offs between them.

3. Consumer Prices: Noel Cahill summarised the NESC paper. There was strong welcome for the Secretariat's paper. Some members argued that, this analysis having been done, further work belonged in Forfas and the National Competitiveness Council (NCC). Others argued that the issue belongs also in a NESC discussion and analysis of the crisis, in which significant changes in incomes and prices are part of the overall economic and social adjustment and will play a role in resolution and recovery; as well as pricing to market, do key sectors have a structure that keeps prices high? The following issues were raised in the discussion: the severe impact of high prices on those on low incomes, role of labour costs, local authority charges, legal costs, incentives to purchase on the black market; and limited public awareness and mobilisation around high prices. The Chair suggested that the Secretariat dialogue with Forfas and the NCC on the analysis and issues

4. The next meeting was set for: Friday July 19th, Clock Tower, 10.00 am.