



## Minutes of the 410<sup>th</sup> NESC Council Meeting, 16<sup>th</sup> May 2014

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

**Attendance:** Martin Fraser (Chair), Michael O'Sullivan, Mary Daly, Frank Allen, Edmond Connolly, Pat Smith, Patricia Murphy, Michael Ewing, Karin Dubsy, Seán Ó Riain, Mary Walsh, Caroline Fahey, Seán Healy, James Doorley, Brid O'Brien, Tony Donohue, Ian Talbot, David Hegarty, Manus O'Riordan, Sally Anne Kinahan, David Begg, John Murphy, and Gavan O'Leary.

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

**Apologies:** Edgar Morgenroth, Shay Cody, Tom Parlon, Seámus O'Donoghue, Danny McCoy, and Seamus O'Donohoe, Niamh O'Donoghue.

**Minutes of the Meeting of April 2014** were approved.

1. **Matters arising:** none.
2. **Social Housing Provision Report:** Rory O'Donnell outlined work done since the last Council meeting. The Council members welcomed the report. Issues raised in the discussion included the following: the establishment of a new institution would take time and short term measures are required while putting in place what is needed for a medium term response; there is a need to ensure that people are protected from higher rents that could arise in a cost rental system; the new institution must be firmly established on a non-profit basis; there is scope for a greater contribution by the approved housing bodies within the proposed new arrangements; the benefits of tenant purchase and differential rent were noted; the low profitability of new construction was identified as a key obstacle to increased supply; concern was expressed in relation to the poor terms of employment now being offered to some people in the construction sector. It was agreed to proceed to timely publication of the report. The importance of effective communication of the messages of the report on publication was emphasised. It was also agreed that NESC would undertake further work on housing.
3. **Sustainable Development:** Rory O'Donnell introduced a proposal to undertake work on environmental policy integration. The Council's sanction was sought to invite tenders for research in this area. Members welcomed several of the proposed areas of study, but asked that the focus and goals of the research be set out more clearly at the start of the proposal. In discussion a number of aspects of environmental policy integration were considered. The importance of implementation was emphasised. Even if integrated plans are developed, there may not be integration in all dimensions when plans are being delivered; the strategy on ocean wealth was cited as an example of this. Some members raised the question as to what is the purpose of the proposed work and it was suggested that it was too early to examine the effectiveness of recent plans in the agri-food area. Ireland has made huge strides in environmental protection and sustainability. It was noted that the Government has requested NESC to address environmental sustainability in its work. NESC can play a valuable role in identifying the tradeoffs between economic, social and environmental effects, but it is important to understand that there is also scope to undertake actions that yield net gains in economic, social and environmental terms. The Secretariat undertook to revise the draft proposal.
4. **Other business:** It was that NESC make a submission on the green paper on energy. Members of the Council proposed that NESC examine significant labour market challenges including long term unemployment and precarious employment. It was agreed that a paper on labour market issues would be brought to the June Council.

The next meeting was set for: **Friday, 20<sup>th</sup> June**, Clock Tower, 10.00 a.m.