



Minutes of the 424th NESC Council Meeting, 18th December 2015

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

Attendance: John Shaw (Chair), Tony Donohue, Gavan O’Leary, Edmond Connolly, Seán Ó Riain, Michael O’Sullivan, Karen Murphy, Seán Healy, James Doorley, Brid O’Brien, Mary Walsh, Michael Ewing, Ian Talbot, David Hegarty, John McCarthy, John Murphy, Edgar Morgenroth, Shay Cody, Frank Allen and Seamus O’Donohoe.

Secretariat: Rory O’Donnell, Damian Thomas, Larry O’Connell, Anne-Marie McGauran, Jeanne Moore, Helen Johnston, Noel Cahill and Richard Holland.

Apologies: Mary Daly, Siobhan Egan, Anna Davies, Tom Parlon, Simonetta Ryan, Michelle Norris and Oisín Coghlan.

1. Minutes of the Meeting of November 2015 were approved.

2. Infrastructure: Damian Thomas presented the paper circulated to Council, *Developing a New Approach to Infrastructure Policy*.

Council members strongly endorsed the paper, noting the strength of the case made for a new approach to infrastructure. Members highlighted the need to: further define what is meant by infrastructure; develop the functions and role of any possible new institutional arrangement and how these would complement existing approaches; ensure that infrastructure is viewed as an end not a means in itself; ensure that the new arrangements are not too narrowly associated with an overly technocratic and siloed approach; link this work with ongoing work around planning and the forthcoming National Planning Framework; highlight social and environmental criteria, particularly, in relation to evaluation. Note was also made of the importance of an all-island approach; the UN principles for responsible investment; the difficulties associated with measuring infrastructure deficits; the importance of asset management; the challenge of defining priorities, with the importance of housing emphasised—both wider housing infrastructure and social housing—and under-investment in skills and education. In addition, members highlighted: the cost of land in Ireland; the need to investigate long-run impact of PPPs; opportunities associated with changes to pensions and the prospect of auto-enrolment; the need to further develop the discussion on fiscal rules; the impact of demographic drivers, in particular in relation to education and ageing; the complexities associated with regional and rural development; the importance of how any new arrangements are communicated; the need to spell out the implications for existing institutions; the need to ensure that any new entity is not overly associated with any one political party; and, the link with government procurement and the Office of Public Procurement. In closing, the Chair stated that the Secretariat would develop the paper, engaging in dialogue with relevant departments. A revised report would be brought back to the Council early in 2016.

3. Any other business: The next meeting was set for Friday, 15th January 2016.