

Project Ireland 2040 Delivery Board

12th July 2023

Whitaker Room, Department of Public Expenditure, NDP

Delivery and Reform, Government Buildings, Upper Merrion Street,

Dublin 2



Tionscadal Éireann
Project Ireland
2040

Minutes

Participants

Chair: Minister Paschal Donohoe TD

External Board Members: PJ Rudden, Sean O'Driscoll, Thomas Barrett, Terry Prendergast.

Secretary General Board Members: Graham Doyle (DHLGH), Jim Breslin (DFHERIS)

In attendance: Paul Hogan (DHLGH), John Conlon (DPENDR), Fiona O'Connor (Special Advisor to Minister Donohoe), Cassandra Hinchy (DFHERIS), Paul Healy (Skillnet), William Beausang (DFHERIS), Sarah Miley (DFHERIS), Andrew Brownlee (Solas).

Apologies: Mary Hughes, David Moloney (Secretary General, DPENDR)

Secretariat: Kevin Meaney, Margaret O'Donnell, Tom Fleming (DPENDR).

1. Minutes of the May 2ND Meeting

The draft minutes of the May 2nd meeting and the agenda for today's meeting were agreed as circulated.

2. Discussion on the presentation on boosting skills capacity from DFHERIS

The Minister noted that he had found the presentation as circulated to be very helpful. DFHERIS gave a brief overview its presentation. It stated there was a steady pipeline of skills needed in the country and that the workforce was now back to a figure of 10% above that of pre-Covid levels. It outlined the challenges in terms of productivity which is partly due to the high degree of fragmentation in the construction sector. The State needs to use more modern methods of construction to meet the current demand challenges.

The response to demand for new entrants is impressive with an intake of 15,000 this year and 18,000 thereafter. There is a need for 4,000 craft apprentices each year and Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) are needed to address and facilitate this objective. There are currently four training centres of excellence for retrofitting.

The Minister opened up the discussion to the Board members and asked what the Board can do to assist delivery of the agenda in the skills space.

DHLGH stated that some bigger builders were now investing more in MMC and that there is a greater commitment from Government to the Capital programmes than in previous times. It was noted by the external members, that Digital would be key to the increasing female participation in the sector but this will take some time. The external members noted, that the issues of productivity in the sector were not new – the focus on productivity has to be on the large construction firms. In some large housing developments, new homes are being built elsewhere and are now erected on-site.

There was a discussion on the need to challenge the perception that the industry. Communication of the skills needed and the diversity of roles available was vital.

The Minister stated that we had to consider how to progress further improvements in apprenticeships in the light of full employment in the economy and increased wages. It was also noted by DFHERIS that the Board could help by insisting on medium term timelines and the putting in place of permanent solutions.

The external members spoke about the quality apprenticeship schemes in Germany and posed the question if we could take any learning on how they operate their schemes.

DHLGH spoke of the need to work more closely with parents to encourage young people into trades and also to continue to work with the industry and develop it into the future. Skillnet noted that they have been promoting lifelong learning in the industry and the challenges around getting the smaller players involved – only 5% of industry are large construction firms.

3. Update on National Planning Framework Review

DHLGH said that the current planning review which will be completed by March/April next year will result in a massive piece of new planning (including marine planning) and this will bring greater certainty around planning overall. A three person review is underway the results of which will be brought back to this Board. Key issues in the review are: Demographics, Digitalisation and Regionalisation. DHLGH have engaged the ESRI to look at the demographics. DHLGH also noted the complexity of the planning legislation, the third largest bill in the history of the state, but that it was not going to fix planning overnight. There will still be judicial reviews but hopefully less of them. There were concerns around the availability of human resources in planning overall and reference was made by members to some short conversion courses at the Institutes that could help to bridge the skills deficit. The Minister noted that we now had the highest number of people ever serving in the public service. The external members noted that offshore wind sector was an area for potential inclusion as it is not currently in the NDP.

4. Discussion on paper setting out constraints to NDP Delivery

The Minister noted that a paper had been circulated to the Board summarising the main constraints to NDP delivery that had been provided by Board members. The main constraints identified by members are

1. Planning

- Resourcing of the planning system
- Lack of confidence in the planning system
- Delays in the planning system
- Outdated or absent Ministerial Guidelines on Planning

2. Capabilities and Capacity in public sector bodies but in particular at local government level

- Number of staff and skillsets of public sector bodies
- Lack of cross-sectoral collaboration and communication

3. Lack of digital technology skills and adoption in the industry to date

4. Delivery of Housing

5. Lack of Private Sector Capacity

- Lack of consistent approach to skills development in the industry
- Number of Infrastructure Providers and Complex Organisational Structures

In a response to a question from the Minister, external members noted public acceptance as an additional constraint – not only in the area of planning as already identified but in a wider sense. The Minister proposed to the Board that the five constraints to NDP delivery identified in the paper would be the focus of their work going forward. The Minister said that a paper would be circulated to the Board in advance of the next meeting setting out two action points for each of the five constraints. The focus of the Board going forward will be to support the Secretary Generals to make interventions that will enhance delivery of their NDP objectives. The Minister also suggested that a future meeting of the Board should be held off-site at a venue where NDP is being delivered.

5. Date of next meeting

The Secretariat will confirm the date of the next meeting which will be held in September.

6. AOB

No items were raised under any other business.

Actions arising from July 12th 2023 meeting
1. Circulate a paper in advance of the next meeting setting out two action points to address the constraints to NDP delivery that have been identified (NIO)