



***MID-EAST REGIONAL AUTHORITY***

***ÚDARÁS RÉIGIÚNACH AN MHEÁNOIRTHIR***

# ***MINUTES***

***OF THE MID-EAST REGIONAL AUTHORITY***

***HELD ON***

***THURSDAY 12 FEBRUARY 2009***

***IN***

***COUNCIL CHAMBER, WICKLOW***

***MINUTE NO. 01.09 – 07.09***



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE MID-EAST REGIONAL  
AUTHORITY HELD ON THURSDAY 12 FEBRUARY 2009 IN COUNCIL  
CHAMBER, WICKLOW AT 6.00 P.M.**

**Present:**

**Cllr. Tommy Reilly, Cathaoirleach**

Cllr. Pat Black

Cllr. Sylvester Bourke

Cllr. Jimmy Fegan

Cllr. Brian Fitzgerald

Cllr. Tom Fortune

Cllr. Rainsford Hendy

Cllr. Jim Holloway

Cllr. George Jones

Cllr. Conal Kavanagh

Cllr. Kathleen Kelleher

Cllr. Paul Kelly

Cllr. Michael Lynch

Cllr. Tony McEvoy

Cllr. John McGinley

Cllr. James Mangan

Cllr. Martin Miley

Cllr. Micheál Nolan

Cllr. Patsy O'Neill

Cllr. Pat Vance

**Apologies:**

Cllr. Seamus Murray

Cllr. John Ryan

**In attendance:**

Mr. Tom Dowling, Meath County Council, Designated Manager.

Mr. John Byrne, Director MERA

Mr. Gerry Geoghegan, RPS Limited.

Ms. Emily Ledwith, RPS Limited

Mr. David Ryan, Dublin City Council.

**MINUTE NO. 01.09**

**Minutes of Meeting of the Mid-East Regional Authority held on 11 December 2008.**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Mid-East Regional Authority held on 11 December 2008 were proposed by Cllr. Rainsford Hendy, seconded by Cllr. Michael Lynch, and agreed.

**MINUTE NO. 02.09**

**Matters Arising.**

No matters arose from the Minutes.

**MINUTE NO. 03.09**

**Dublin Region Water Supply Project – Presentation by Mr. Gerry Geoghegan, RPS Limited.**

At the December meeting of the Regional Authority, the Members discussed the Public Consultation Process in relation to the upcoming Water Supply Project for the Greater Dublin Region. At the meeting, the Members agreed that the Regional Authority would receive a more detailed presentation on the water supply proposals from the appointed Consultants in this area. The Consultants RPS Limited were represented at the meeting by Mr. Gerry Geoghegan, Ms. Emily Ledwith and also by Mr. David Ryan from Dublin City Council.

Mr. Geoghegan gave a presentation to the Members, which consisted of the background to the current situation, the need for a new water supply for the Region, the options available to supply this water, the stakeholder issues and the overall summary of the requirements needed. He emphasised that the growth in demand for water has been driven by a number of factors, including an increase in the population from 1.5 million to an expected 2.2 million in the year 2031, leakages had an improvement since 1997 but continue to be a drain on the water supply, the water conservation policy has helped by raising the awareness of the need to conserve water, and by introducing non-domestic metering to control water supply and finally the economic growth has shown an increase over the longer term in the demand for water expected in this Country.

He outlined ten different water supply options ranging from extraction from Lough Ree and Lough Derg, a combination of Lough Ree and Lough Derg, impoundment of water during high flow periods, abstraction from the Parteen basin, and also other options consisting of desalination proposals, abstraction of ground water, and the usage of water from the Liffey/Barrow sources. He added that not all were of equal merit, some options had capacity problems and other options had strong environmental benefits, e.g. the storage of winter floodwater and there was also the cost implication for these options.

Following consideration of feedback from the public consultation process, the water supply options will be short listed in accordance with long-term sustainability criteria (Environmental, Economic and Socio Economic). More detailed work will then be carried out on the short listed options, and Dublin City Council and all other relevant Authorities, in conjunction with the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, will then select a preferred option for bringing forward into the statutory process which will be overseen by An Bord Pleanála.

The selection of the preferred option is anticipated in late 2009.

Following adoption by Dublin City Council and relevant Local Authorities, the statutory planning process is anticipated to commence in early 2010.

Following the presentation, An Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Tommy Reilly thanked Mr. Geoghegan for his presentation and opened the issue for debate by the Members.

In responding to the many and varied queries raised by the Members, Mr. Geoghegan replied to the various issues as below.

The National average for loss of water from leakage was over 50%, however, Dublin Region is a better performer and is currently standing at 30% leakage. It is possible to get this down to about 20%. However, as the network is over 150 years old, it would not be possible to get leakages down beyond this level.

The Regional Authority in the Midland Region was consulted and a presentation was made to the Midland Regional Authority two weeks ago. The three County Councils of the Region in the Midlands have also been consulted.

The actual demand from populations in the Greater Dublin Region is approximately 90% from Kildare, 65% from Wicklow and 10% from Meath. The options in relation to recycling and desalination were considered, however, there are major issues with technology required for these processes and there are also serious issues in relation to costs and the possible public acceptance of recycled drinking water.

The studies in relation to the options for water supply and the issues in relation to future payments will be decided at Government level under the Water Pricing Policy Scheme. A final decision on the options will be taken following the full public consultation and technical procedures, by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in conjunction with the lead Authority, Dublin City Council and including the involvement of the other Local Authorities.

The Consultants also investigated the possibility of accessing water from ground water sources in the Fingal Aquifer. This could possibly take in another 10 million litres per day, however, after that the recharge rate of groundwater refilling is slow so there is no realistic future option availability here.

An Cathaoirleach again thanked the delegation for their very thorough presentation and discussion, and indicated that the Regional Authority will be interested in hearing the outcome of the Public Consultation Process and the final water supply choices to be made for the Region.

#### **MINUTE NO. 04.09**

##### **Rural Development Programme 2007-2013.**

The Members noted with interest the letter dated 23 January 2009, received from the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, in relation to changes to the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013.

This relates from procedures from the Common Agricultural Policy health check. The result being that, from a rural development point of view, there is an amount of €120 million approximately to become available to Ireland's RDP over the next four years. As a result, the remit of the Rural Development Policy must be expanded to respond to new and ongoing challenges, including:

- Climate Change adaptation and mitigation
- Renewable energies
- Water management
- Biodiversity
- Innovation relating to previous four measures
- Restructuring of the dairy sector.

#### **MINUTE NO. 05.09**

##### **National Broadband Scheme.**

Following a report, which had been circulated with the agenda, was considered by the Members and noted.

“On 22 January 2009, the Minister for Communications, Eamon Ryan, T.D., formally launched the New National Broadband Scheme.

This Scheme, which is co-financed under the two Regional Operational Programmes 2007-2013, is designed to delivery broadband at an affordable price to all areas of the country, which are presently unserved.

A funding package of €120 million was secured for the programme to ensure that broadband will be universally available in the Southern & Eastern Region. Funding for the Scheme includes a combination of Exchequer funds, European Regional Development fund and Private Sector funding. Following the conclusion of a competitive tendering process, the Minister has entered into a Contract for the delivery of this Scheme with '3' (a Hutchinson Whampoa Company).

Ireland currently has over 1.2 million subscribers to broadband. The National Broadband Scheme will provide the remaining 10% of the population or approximately 33% of the area of the country, with broadband services. Ireland will have 100% coverage by September 2010; half of the area under the Scheme will be covered by the end of this year.

The investment will create 170 jobs in both Regions and significantly more jobs will be safeguarded and created as the availability of broadband will serve to strengthen rural communities and will lead to increases in investment and enterprise in the targeted areas.

'3' will extend its network to provide mobile wireless broadband services into the NBS area. Initially, the service will have a minimum download speed of 1.2 mbps. At least two upgrades of speeds are planned during the lifetime of the contract. These product upgrades will be carried out at no cost to the customer.

The Mid-West Regional Authority recently commissioned an Assessment of the availability of Rural Broadband in Ireland, and this is attached for information”

**MINUTE NO. 06.09**

**Correspondence/Conferences.**

Details of upcoming Conference had been circulated with the agenda, and the names of the delegates to attend were submitted to the Director.

**MINUTE NO. 07.09**

**Any Other Business.**

Date of next meeting, Thursday 12 March in County Hall, Navan.

**Signed:**

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**Cllr. Tommy Reilly**  
**Cathaoirleach**

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**Mr. John Byrne**  
**Director**

**Date:**

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