

UKSPF Northern Ireland Partnership Group
16 March 2023, 11.00am to 12.30pm
Erskine House, Room B6.03, 20-32 Chichester St, Belfast

Members attending:

Name	Organisation	Sector
Emran Mian (Chair)	DLUHC	UK government
Colin Perry - Director	NIO	UK government
Kim McLaughlin - Director of Regeneration and Planning on behalf of Adrian McCreesh	SOLACE (Fermanagh and Omagh District Council)	Local government
Cathy Keenan – Enterprise and Business Growth Manager on behalf of John Greer	SOLACE (Belfast City Council)	Local government
Ryan Feeney - Acting VP, representing Professor Ian Greer	Queen’s University Belfast	Higher education/skills
Celine McStravick - CEO	NICVA	Voluntary and community
Valerie McConville - CEO	CO3	Voluntary and community
Claire Sullivan – Director of Policy	CBI	Business

Secretariat

The meeting was supported by DLUHC officials: Chris Taylor, Christine Robinson and Barrie Doherty (in person) and Alison Ford and Philip Lloyd (online).

1. Chair’s Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting, noting:

- Declarations of members interests for all members and nominees.
- Celine McStravick attending as new CEO at NICVA.
- Apologies from Ann McGregor, Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce.
- Maeve Monaghan did not attend due to her organisation’s interest in the lead discussion topic.

2. Progress update since the last meeting

DLUHC officials provided a short overview of progress since the last meeting on the Partnership Group, including:

- Launch of Investment Plan and economic inactivity competition in December 2022
- Engagement with DfE commenced on opportunities to commission innovation, manufacturing, green growth and sector support , as well as Multiply.
- Council-led Green Spaces projects approved in February 2023.
- Draft commission shared with councils on Entrepreneurship Support Service

3. Economic inactivity competition

DLUHC reported they had fully assessed all eligible bids received for the Economic Inactivity project competition which ran from 14 December to 27 January. Officials noted there was a strong response from bidders with a range of applications across geographies and themes, with bids in excess of funding availability.

Members views were sought to inform ministerial selection considerations, including the application of additional considerations in terms of geographic distribution, cohort mix; the potential to scale projects; and communications with bidders.

Members noted that:

- achieving a geographic and cohort balance is important, and scaling down projects to enable a broader range of applications could also be considered
- given the volume of bids received, it may also be appropriate to consider allocating more funding from the people and skills allocation for economic inactivity
- there is an ongoing need to invest in supporting local businesses and communities and place, and any additional investment in economic inactivity projects should not compromise investment in these important priorities

Members recommended that all bidders – successful and unsuccessful – should be notified of the outcome of the competition at the same time.

4. Forward look

DLUHC officials provided Members with a short overview of upcoming work including commissioning Multiply, innovation, manufacturing and sector support, and communities and place packages.

DLUHC officials noted that the evaluation plan for UKSPF as a whole, which will include selection of locations (council areas) for place based case studies in Northern Ireland, which will be considered further at a future meeting.

5. Partnership Group refresh

DLUHC noted intent to refresh the Partnership Group as it moves into the delivery phase, including making minor amendments to the current membership and establish two sub-groups focused on economic inactivity and supporting local business.

6. AOB & Date of Next Meeting

DLUHC proposed to hold the next meeting in June to guide implementation of next stage commissioning.