

**Minutes of Talk Talk Consultative Forum**  
**Thursday, 27<sup>th</sup> September 2012**  
**Tower Hotel Waterford**

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| Acting Chair: | Mr Ian McKenna         | Department of Education & Skills          |
| Members       | Mr Gerard Morgan       | City of Waterford VEC                     |
|               | Ms Jackie Gaule        | City of Waterford County Enterprise Board |
|               | Ms Laura Keane         | Waterford Institute of Technology         |
|               | Mr Michael Walshe      | Waterford City Council                    |
|               | Ms Sandra Hegarty      | Enterprise Ireland                        |
|               | Mr John Cassidy        | FÁS                                       |
|               | Mr Con Quinlan         | Department of Social Protection           |
|               | Mr Donal Spellman      | Department of Social Protection           |
|               | Ms Ann Marie Caulfield | IBEC                                      |
|               | Ms Joanne Morrissey    | EGF Coordination Unit                     |
|               | Mr Tom Phelan          | Talk Talk Former Workers' Association     |
|               | Mr Feargus Power       | Talk Talk Former Workers' Association     |
|               | Mr Colm Dunphy         | Talk Talk Former Workers' Association     |
|               | Mr Paul Quilty         | Talk Talk Former Workers' Association     |
|               | Mr Sean Morton         | Talk Talk Former Workers' Association     |
| Apologies:    | Dr. Ruaidhri Neavyn    | Waterford Institute of Technology         |
|               | Mr Ciaran Cullen       | City of Waterford County Enterprise Board |
|               | Mr Justin Sinnott      | Higher Education Authority                |
|               | Mr David Smith         | EGF Coordination Unit                     |
|               | Mr Peter Rigney        | Irish Congress of Trade Unions            |
| Minute Taker: | Ms Paula Whyte         | EGF Coordination Unit                     |

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| 1.0 | <b>Welcome and Apologies</b>  | ACTION |
| 1.1 | <p>Mr McKenna formally welcomed all to the first meeting of the Talk Talk Consultative Forum. Minister Cannon requested him to bring his best wishes to the Forum and emphasised his desire to maintain progress on this initiative. He was also anxious to be kept informed of proceedings. In the absence of Dr Ruaidhrí Neavyn, it was agreed that Mr McKenna would chair the meeting.</p> <p>In his opening remarks, Mr. McKenna acknowledged the impact that the closure of Talk Talk has had on the Waterford economy and the opportunity represented by the proposed EGF programme to position the former Talk Talk workers for future employment opportunities. He also highlighted the importance of maximising participation prior to programme finish date of 28<sup>th</sup> February 2014. Mr. McKenna confirmed that the application for co-funding which was approved by the European Commission in July 2012, had received a hearing in European Parliament at Committee Stage and a decision date is anticipated towards the end of October/ early November.</p> |        |

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| 2.0 | <b>Stakeholder Update</b>   |                          |
| 2.1 | <p><b>City of Waterford County Enterprise Board</b></p> <p>Ms Gaule advised that 40 clients have attended the CEB information sessions. Ten clients are progressing to date with a further seventeen requesting Expression of Interest forms. The forum were also notified that the Idea Generation and Start Your Own Business programme would be commencing shortly, consisting of two sessions per week over a five week period. Individuals will then be allocated mentors to assist with business support.</p> <p>It was also noted that every application will be looked at on its own merit and rigorously evaluated to ensure sustainability. Business displacement issues must be taken into account in relation to the impact on viable businesses already established in the catchment area.</p>   |                          |
| 2.2 | <p><b>City of Waterford VEC Report</b></p> <p>The Forum received an update from Mr Morgan in relation to enrolments for local VECs. Members were advised that discussions had taken place with the CEO of Fastrack to IT (FIT) with regard to customised courses. In this regard, Mr. Morgan stated that he will engage bi-laterally with TTFWA with the likelihood of these courses commencing either pre Christmas or January 2013. Due to the short time frame, the intention is that they would talk to group of Talk Talk workers within next two weeks depending on interest levels. While it was conceded that it may not be possible to mobilise people so quickly, Mr Phelan indicated that the Workers' Group would certainly try and pull the group together, stating that they could utilise their facebook page to elicit responses. He also suggested that the session could be recorded and uploaded but that he would need to know fairly soon when this was going to happen.</p> | G.Morgan                 |
| 2.3 | <p><b>Department of Social Protection</b></p> <p>Mr Quinlan provided some detailed analysis concerning the number of DSP interactions with Talk Talk cohort to date. While 284 were clients of the local office, it is important to note that some may be claiming income supports elsewhere in Ireland. It was also noted that a significant number of Talk Talk workers never engaged with the Employment Services Unit of DSP.</p> <p>It was agreed that the 'non-engagement' element was a source of concern to all, which should form part of the agenda of the Forum.</p>   |                          |
| 2.4 | <p><b>Waterford Institute of Technology</b></p> <p>The Forum was presented with a progress Report by Ms Keane who confirmed that WIT interaction with TT workers was now at 16%</p>   | L.Keane /<br>J.Morrissey |

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|     | of the overall redundant workers. A discussion ensued in relation to additional clients who may be identified as EGF eligible. WIT will liaise with EGF Co-ordination.   |     |
| 2.5 | <p><b>FAS</b></p> <p>Mr Cassidy provided an overview of the training activity statistics in relation to FÁS, and confirmed that all Talk Talk clients who sought training had received an offering. He advised that there were a small number of clients awaiting placement on a CISCO course. Once this programme is up and running, he stated that he was confident that the waiting list would be wiped out. In response to a comment from Mr Quinlan, Mr Cassidy replied that interventions were client focused and that if clients wanted to do courses outside of what was available, then the EGF can make training grants available.</p>   |     |
| 2.6 | <p><b>EGF Co-ordination Unit</b></p> <p>Ms Morrissey gave an overview of the role and responsibilities of the EGF Coordination Unit, client profiles, client engagement to date, EGF training grants and course expense contribution and governance. Occupational guidance was discussed as being a key element for the individual to make an informed choice.</p>   |     |
| 2.7 | <p><b>Talk Talk Worker's Association</b></p> <p>Mr Phelan, on behalf of the Workers Association made reference to a survey that was carried out in August 2012, which indicated that almost half of the Talk Talk respondents have not engaged. It also highlighted, inter alia, that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• some individuals may not be eligible for BTEA;</li> <li>• a minority were setting up in business;</li> <li>• 6% were seeking more intense guidance to facilitate the return to employment or education.</li> </ul> <p>An enquiry was made with regard to defraying the cost of interview expenses, given that Waterford is a black spot in terms of unemployment, with the majority of individuals having to travel for interviews outside of the Waterford area. Mr. Phelan also raised the question of advance payments for individuals who are unable to pay for equipment and materials upfront and avail of funding under the Course Expense Contribution (CEC).</p> <p>Mr McKenna responded that BTEA was part of a 'bigger picture' and that the DSP were required to apply eligibility criteria consistently and equitably for all clients. However, he undertook to see if scope existed with the CEC scheme to address this matter. He would respond within seven to ten days. With regard to individuals who are having difficulty paying up front for equipment</p> | All |

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|     | <p>and materials, he confirmed that priority would be given to those by the EGF Coordination Unit.</p> <p>Furthermore, Service Providers should work together to prioritise those in need of more intense guidance and assistance.</p>   |                            |
| 2.8 | <p><b>IBEC</b></p> <p>From an IBEC perspective, Ms Caulfield stated that she represents a large number of clients and it may be opportune to bring them together with the former workers.</p> <p>Mr McKenna agreed to have further discussions with Ms Caulfield in this regard with a view to including as part of the EGF Talk Talk re-launch process.</p>   | I.McKenna/A<br>M.Caulfield |
| 2.9 | <p><b>Waterford City Council</b></p> <p>Mr Walsh stated that in order to have a clearer overview of the implementation of the Talk Talk project, an indication as to budget spend would need to be provided. Mr. Walsh expressed his concern around the IT skills area and felt that more strategic questions should be asked as to whether opportunities are being missed. He was also of the opinion that courses should be linked with areas where demand exists locally. A general discussion followed in relation to (1) job opportunities in the area (2) identifying training needs and (3) guidance in relation to action planning.</p> <p>Mr McKenna noted that a balance must be struck between delivery of personalised services and service providers being 'directive' in terms of choice. With regard to monitoring of expenditure, the practice in EGF to date had been to await final claims. However, where interim claims were made, this could be made available.</p> |                            |
| 3.0 | <p><b>Date and venue of Next Meeting</b></p> <p>The next Meeting is scheduled for 13<sup>th</sup> December 2012 at a venue to be decided.</p>  |                            |