



The Centre for
Cross Border Studies

MEDIA WATCH

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THE IRISH TIMES

Noonan set to snub Stormont on Nama; Minister expected to decline request to compel agency to attend hearing

Minister for Finance Michael Noonan is set to spurn a request from Stormont to compel the National Asset Management Agency to attend a committee hearing into corruption allegations surrounding the purchase of the agency's Northern Ireland portfolio.

Nama has been sharply criticised for snubbing an inquiry into the affair by the finance committee of the Northern Ireland Assembly. Committee chairman Daithí McKay has cast Nama refusal to attend as an "insult to the committee".

He has suggested the committee may seek to compel Nama to attend a hearing if it does not come forward voluntarily to the committee.

Mr McKay has instructed officials to write to Mr Noonan asking him to "strongly advise Nama to attend".

It is understood the Minister will say he has no power under the legislation underpinning Nama to instruct or advise Frank Daly, the agency's chairman, to go before the Stormont committee or any parliamentary committee in any jurisdiction outside the State.

Mr Noonan may indicate, however, that this stricture does not preclude Nama from providing written answers to written questions submitted by the Assembly committee.

At the same time, the Government has anxieties that any appearance by Nama before the committee would set precedents on two fronts.

Second, the Government is concerned that an appearance in Stormont by Nama could lead to pressure on it to attend parliamentary committees in any other country in which it has had business dealings. Again, the Government is reluctant to go down that road.

Mr Daly has previously said Nama is accountable to the Dáil Committee of Public Accounts. He has also indicated any information provided to the Dáil committee would be provided to the Stormont committee via Oireachtas transcripts.

Mr McKay has insisted this was unacceptable in light of Nama's role in the North in relation to the sale of Cerberus and in light of "huge interest" in the issue **North and South**. He has argued Nama has a responsibility to send officials to Stormont to answer questions about the management of the sale.

Source: The Irish Times

19 July 2015



Investor on board to sink EUR 10m into north-south ferry

A key lieutenant to property magnate Aidan Brooks is set to plough the proceeds of a EUR 70 million US real estate play into a **cross-border** ferry project.

Paul O'Sullivan recently steered through the sale of four prime office buildings in Boston to ABS Real Estate Investments.

He now plans to back a EUR 10 million ferry project between Greenore, Co Louth and Newcastle, Co Down. The project will see a terminal built at each port. O'Sullivan worked closely as an advisor to Brooks, who is an associate of JP McManus and John Magnier.

Limerick native O'Sullivan had bought up the Boston properties for a combined total of around EUR 48 million.

Work on the ferry scheme has been under way since 2006, but planning permission was approved last month for the ferry route, which will span 1.3 miles and will replace a 33 mile car journey through Newry.

The developer, Carlingford Ferries, commissioned consultant Dr Pat McCloughan to conduct an economic impact analysis. According to the study, the service could support 20 full-time jobs and increase spending in the region by EUR 10 million annually.

Belfast engineering firm RPS Consulting worked on navigation routes and land-based structural designs for the ferry route. The crossing is expected to take around 13 minutes. The operator is planning to capitalise on commuter traffic as well as **cross-border** tourism. The ferry will be able to accommodate tour buses as well as cars.

O'Sullivan said that the ferry will dramatically enhance accessibility. There is a compelling interest in the prospect that a car ferry service across Carlingford Lough will bring destinations as far apart as the Boyne Valley in Co. Meath and Newcastle, Co Down within touching distance of each other.

Source: The Sunday Business Post

20 July 2015

THE IRISH TIMES

Cross-regional programme for creative industries sector; The £3.5m Honeycomb programme in two years delivered training to 3,000 people in the Border region

A unique cross-regional programme aimed at maximising the economic potential of the creative industries sector has just drawn to a close. Over the past two years, the £3.5 million Ulster University-led Honeycomb programme delivered training to 3,000 people in the Border region, organised more than 120 networking and business support events, and assisted creative digital content enterprises win more than £380,000 in public sector contracts which would otherwise have been closed to them.

"We held an event every 2½ days during the two years of the project," says Fiona McElroy, creative enterprise manager with the Ulster University and Honeycomb project manager. "It was intense but very worthwhile. The industry appreciated it and will miss it. It wasn't just a programme devised by university administrators; it made a real impact on the sector."

The Honeycomb-Creative Works programme targeted the digital content sector in Northern Ireland, the six Border counties of the Republic and the western seaboard of Scotland.

Delivered by a partnership led by Ulster University and comprising Dundalk Institute of Technology and Creative Skillset in Scotland, and part-financed by the European Union's European Regional Development through the Interreg IVA **Cross-Border** Programme, Honeycomb addressed the economic, educational, social and cultural needs of the sector by focusing on SMEs, organisations and individuals that play a role or have a vested interest in the development of the sector. Areas of particular focus were film and broadcast, animation, computer gaming, interactive media and music technologies.

"The programme had four key themes," McElroy says. "The first was research- and intelligence-gathering to monitor sectoral developments and ensure that the programme was constantly updated in light of new industry requirements.

"The second was the development of networks of scale to build the capacity of sector and establish greater links between digital content SMEs, freelancers and start-ups across the three regions. In the area of skills development, we addressed the shortfall in sector-specific training for digital content companies. Finally, we also provided development and project finance through the Honeypot dedicated seed fund."

The research element identified the skills gaps which existed in the industry. "We compiled reports on the five sub-sectors targeted by the programme and the results informed us of where the skills gaps were and how we could address them."

In all, £1.3 million was invested in skills training across a mix of programmes. "We had everything from half-day workshops to five-day continuing professional-development programmes, where participants got exposure to global leaders in different areas. We had 15 international industry leaders who came and gave tips and insights on how to build a successful digital content business. We also ran a number of post-graduate modules in colleges and universities which were free of charge for Honeycomb programme participants."

The six post-graduate modules covered leadership in the creative industries, developing creative entrepreneurs, copyright and the information society, game music composition, exploring transmedia production and working with location sound.

In addition, 82 e-learning courses were made available on thehoneycomb.net while 650 people took part in 48 continuing professional development courses.

Another element was the targeting of 14- 16 year old second-level school students to explain the industry to them. "They don't realise the various roles there are in the digital content sector and we developed the creativeme.co website to explain the industry to them and the opportunities it presents."

The creativeme site offers a range of e-learning materials, an ingenious interactive game and online interviews with a range of industry professionals, including a Hollywood film makers, broadcasters, a musician, broadcasters and singer songwriter Andrew WK.

There was an element of cross-over between the skills development and networking themes. "We helped businesses compete for public sector contracts," McElroy adds. "In some cases the business owner or freelance involved had never tendered before simply because they didn't know how to or weren't aware that they could. We provided training from experts as well as a tender alert service. We also helped companies collaborate on tenders where the contract size might have been too big for them to pitch for individually.

"Overall, we helped participant businesses secure about £400,000 worth of contracts as a result. For example, we helped Derry firm Modern Democracy secure a £100,000 contract in Britain."

"International trade events like SxSW and Unite 3D offer great opportunities to network with people from across the globe. We sent delegations to those conferences as well as to the Web Summit in Dublin and other events and people are already collaborating as a result."

Total funding of £235,000 from the Honeycomb seed fund was made available for 37 projects. Funding of up to £5,000 was available to help digital content freelancers and companies to further establish the commercial potential of a concept and more fully develop and test their ideas.

The Honeycomb Captivate awards of up to £20,000 a project were available to digital content creators who wished to collaborate with another sector outside of digital content such as health, tourism or big data.

"We supported a number of very interesting projects under the Captivate Awards," McElroy says. "One involved Modern Democracy to examine the potential impact of digital technology on the modern electoral process. Another saw a product designer working with oncologist in the development of an app to help people diagnosed with cancer get the information they need about

their condition. Everyone absorbs information differently. The app adapts to the user and their cancer. We also helped The Lost Brothers distribute their fourth album."

McElroy believes the programme's benefits will continue to be felt across the industry. "The activity will continue", she says. "The networks are sufficiently well developed now and will continue. All of Honeycomb's interactions were based on research and contact with the sector and this helped ensure their last impact.

"We worked with the industry and with existing networks rather than competing with them and that helped underpin the success of the programme. We would like to look at carrying on the work through a second Honeycomb programme. The networks we have established will still be there and would provide an excellent foundation for future work with the sector.

"We are keen to continue the brand but we will have to find new sources of funding. The industry reacted very well to the programme because it enhanced existing skills and networks."

Source: [The Irish Times](#)