

## **Note of Meeting between CIF and the Department of Education**

**Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> October 2025 at 11.00 am – 1.00 pm**

**IN-PERSON: Department of Education and Youth, Portlaoise Road, Tullamore,**

### **Attendees**

**DoE:** Hubert Loftus; Stefan Mathews; Brian Alcock; Padraic Smith; Mary Purcell; David Skene; Tony Kelly

**CIF:** Andrew Brownlee; Seamus Duggan, Chair of the PT&CM Committee; Paul Sheridan; Denise Tuffy; Kaleigh Scales

### **Main Items of Discussion**

#### **1 Welcome and Introductions**

Introductions were made and both parties again thanked and acknowledged the importance of the engagement.

#### **2 Summary of Capital Delivery Programme**

The Department has gone through a huge amount of reform since 2020, resulting in a large scale up across the department. Team structures have been altered to assist in the increase in delivery. The Department has seen an influx in delivery of post-primary schools since Covid.

The Department then provided an overview of the different delivery programmes that are in place:

- Overall, the Department has over 1,300 active projects
- *Traditional Programme:* 60 active projects with some in design, but the majority in construction. These projects are usually led by design teams.
- *D&B Programme:* At its peak this programme has 18 large scale projects in construction. Today, there are 10 projects in construction.
- *Adapt Programme:* An employer-led design programme with around 80 projects at various phases with 10 under construction.
- *Devolve Programme:* 140 projects in the remit of the programme with 8-9 projects currently active. These projects are devolved to ETBs and consultants.
  - *NDFA:* Under this remit are NDFA projects which would have around 40 projects in the D&B space.
- *ASA Programme:* Projects under this programme are smaller in value (under €1m) but much larger in quantity. The projects in this programme involve the ETBs and a Board of Management, with many projects currently in construction.

Programmes are supported by Project Managers (PMs), ETBs, Boards of Management, or direct Department oversight. The Department highlighted they have a substantial budget that they are focused on delivering through these streams.

#### **3 DoE Strengthening Processes**

Following extensive reform in recent years, the Department has refreshed its governance and administrative processes to strengthen oversight across its growing programme. Increased reliance on PMs and consultants has prompted a review of financial and contractual management, particularly after a major claim highlighted weaknesses in contract administration. The Department held an online webinar with all consultants involved in a programme, with the aim of improving the financial management of projects. The Department believes this was a catalyst to the process strengthening they have undergone in the past year.

In the last year, three main reporting structures have been improved:

1. Change order form

2. Site visits by technical staff (15-minute unannounced visit to see how the project is progressing)
3. Additional funding request form

Overall, the Department is finding that relying on progress reporting from other parties is not sufficient in identifying issues during construction, prompting measures to improve how project information is captured and communicated. The new reporting templates, especially the Additional Funding Request Form, consolidates existing contract requirements into a standardised Excel format which will help streamline internal approvals. Where reporting gaps are identified, the Department is issuing updated Guidance Notes and procedures to Design Teams to strengthen compliance.

Looking ahead, the Department advised that they are currently developing a sectoral plan which will be published in November. The plan will provide the industry with a two-year forward view of projects and will be updated annually with a strong focus on standardising school buildings.

#### **4 Overview of the CIF DoE Payments Survey**

The Chair of the PT&CM Committee provided an overview of the results of the payments survey that was conducted by the PT&CM Committee. The Department raised questions around two key areas: change orders and final accounts.

With regards to members getting certified change orders paid, the Department stressed the need to distinguish between agreed and certified change orders. The Department believes the issue here could be that contractors are receiving agreements with local ERs, believing these agreements are certified change orders, even though these have not yet been formally certified and remain subject to the claims process. It was emphasised that the ER and QS do not have the authority to agree change orders above a certain limit. It was also emphasised that the onus was on the contractors to provide adequate substantiation to support its claims, which was often not the case.

The follow-up survey by the PT&CM Committee found that most projects experiencing significant payment delays fall within the €0 to €5 million range. These projects are typically part of the Department's Devolve Programme where project oversight rests with Boards of Management or ETBs due to the programme's scale. While the Department is actively progressing payment signoffs, it believes some payments may be delayed or lost within these local management structures.

On the issue of final accounts, the Department noted ongoing challenges in securing timely submissions on final accounts. In addition, outstanding conciliations and claims continue to delay the processing and payment of these accounts.

#### **5 Discussions**

The Department advised that contractors should promptly notify them of any payment delays under the contract. There was a clear position from the Department that it would not withhold certified monies and that any certificates for payment that were invoiced and issued in the appropriate manner would be paid when due. The Department challenged the CIF survey suggesting that the claims for uncertified monies must relate to ongoing claims and / or final account matters that had not been formally agreed and captured in ER's certificates for payment issued in accordance with the Contract.

At the same time, contractors must understand the internal processes ERs and PMs must follow to certify change orders. With this awareness, contractors can apply appropriate pressure to ensure change orders are processed and certified through the correct channels in a timely manner.

An additional point raised by the Department suggested that the Boards of Management could take a greater degree of control over some lower-value projects. This was noted as an option for consideration and would be raised by the CIF with the Smart Offsite Association (SOSA) to determine whether it is something members would be interested in pursuing.

### **6 AOB and Actions**

The meeting concluded with three agreed actions:

1. A webinar hosted by the Department providing an overview of their pipeline.
2. A webinar hosted by the Department outlining their change order process.
3. Establish a clearing house whereby members facing payment delays within contractual frameworks contact the CIF directly with their issue and the CIF will liaise with the Department to get those payments seen to in a timely manner.