

MEETING OF THE ENGLAND COMMITTEE

21st January 2025

Microsoft Teams

MINUTES

PRESENT:

John Mothersole	Chair
Ray Coyle	Member
Matthew Downie	Member
Daria Kuznetsova	Member
Kamran Rashid	Member
Karin Woodley	Member

IN ATTENDANCE:

Phil Chamberlain	Director, England
Emma Corrigan	Director, England
Jon Eastwood	Deputy Director, England
Mark Purvis	Deputy Director, England
Catherine Lindsey	Senior Governance Officer (Minutes)

FOR SPECIFIC ITEMS:

Mike Bates	Senior Head of Finance (<i>Item 3</i>)
Jatinder Purewal	Funding Officer (<i>Items 5 & 6</i>)
Jennie Serfontein	Head of Funding Strategic Programmes (<i>Item 6</i>)
Gill Hart	Funding Manager (<i>Item 6</i>)
Steve Lowden	Funding Officer (<i>Item 6</i>)
Peter Foggo	Funding Officer (<i>Item 6</i>)
Julie Coxon	Funding Officer (<i>Item 6</i>)
Danielle Lawrence	Funding Officer (<i>Item 6</i>)
Rebecca Maxton	Funding Officer (<i>Item 6</i>)
Fiona Brice	Funding Officer (<i>Item 6</i>)
Alex Cosme	Funding Officer (<i>Item 6</i>)
Amy Ingram	Funding Officer (<i>Item 6</i>)
Joe Crabb	Funding Officer (<i>Item 6</i>)
Duncan Nicholson	Head of Regional Funding (North East) (<i>Item 6</i>)
Helen Bushell	Senior Head of Regional Funding (Southern) (<i>Item 6</i>)
Ruth Stephens	Senior Grant Making Manager (<i>Items 5 & 6</i>)

1. COMMITTEE INFORMAL CATCH UP

- 1.1. The Committee held a closed session for members only.

The England Senior Leadership Team (ESLT) and Catherine Lindsey joined the meeting.

2. WELCOME

- 2.1. The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed all, in particular Matthew Downie and Daria Kuznetsova who were joining for the first time in their capacity as new Committee Members.
- 2.2. Apologies were received from Halima Khan.
- 2.3. Karin Woodley had a declared interest in relation to the Cambridge House application under item 6. Karin would therefore leave the meeting and not participate in discussion of the application. She had not received a copy of the paper relating to the application (P10) ahead of the meeting.

- 2.4. The Committee also NOTED declarations from Karin as a member of the City Bridge Foundation's funding panel, and Emma Corrigan as a member of the London Funders Board, due to the links of both organisations with Propel and its associated applications.
- 2.5. The minutes presented for review were approved accurate records, with Committee noting the outcome of the decision which had been taken via correspondence since the November meeting.

3. ENGLAND UPDATE

England Portfolio Review Headlines

- 3.1. Phil Chamberlain advised that Partnership call-outs were live and progressing well, with the portfolio having received significant positive interest externally. The Fund's central Stakeholder Engagement team were supporting development of a Stakeholder Engagement plan, building on feedback and outcomes of the launch.
- 3.2. A cross-Directorate group had been established to clarify implementation requirements for the portfolio. They were currently finalising revisions to the Reaching Communities criteria to align with the community-led missions. These were due to launch in Spring 2025 and would be shared with Committee at the February meeting. In response to a query from the Chair, Phil assured Committee that there was a clear plan and phased approach in place to ensure delivery of the portfolio's longer-term ambitions.

Business Planning

- 3.3. Emma Corrigan provided a brief overview of the directorate's initial proposed business plan for 2025/26, summarising the four key objectives identified by ESLT and advising that a more detailed account of the proposed budget would be brought to the February strategy meeting.
- 3.4. Referring to a recent restructure within the directorate, Committee queried whether and how the reorganisation of staff had impacted the distribution of colleagues with protected characteristics across affected areas of work. Given the changes had taken place very recently, Directors advised that they would investigate timescales for producing a People profile of staff working in the directorate.

ACTION: Emma Corrigan, Phil Chamberlain

- 3.5. Mark Purvis provided some additional context and detail regarding the voluntary exit scheme, noting that the directorate would be engaging in a lessons learned exercise with Union representatives, who had supported the approach taken. The Chair and Directors thanked Mark for his smooth management of the process.

Third Party Funding

- 3.6. Mark summarised the directorate's engagement with the sponsor department regarding the portfolio's development and future funding opportunities. Committee members shared reflections based on their own experiences within the sector and working with government departments, and ESLT assured members that the directorate was positioning itself well on what mattered to and would be best for the portfolio.

General Update Discussion

- 3.7. Noting that several queries regarding the recently announced National Insurance increase had been raised in the feedback on funding decisions, Jon Eastwood

clarified the Fund's position. While not offering a blanket offset of the cost of the increase, the portfolio would remain flexible, providing the option of grant variations wherein grantees could apply for a 10% variation during the course of grant delivery to address factors such as increased costs. Funding teams were also appraising the situation and were prioritising reaching out to those grant holders from underserved communities as part of ongoing pipeline assessments and grants in management. For the latter, to date there had not been a significant increase in related variation requests addressing this issue, either within England or the other Fund's country portfolios.

- 3.8. Committee Members understood this position, but noted that smaller and less established organisations were less likely to be aware of the option to apply for grant variations, and were therefore less likely to apply. As such, they would be disproportionately impacted which risked reinforcement of structural inequity.
- 3.9. Committee also discussed the wider implications of organisations not applying for variations in order to address such a significant impact on their bottom line. The Chair suggested that work be undertaken to provide analysis of the scale and profile of applications for variations.

ACTION: Jon Eastwood

- 3.10. Committee NOTED that a revised version of the Suggestions Tracker had been circulated ahead of the meeting, and that time would be allocated at the next decision meeting to discuss in detail.
- 3.11. The Chair reflected on feedback from ESLT regarding requests for more budgetary information in funding decision reports, and comments from Committee members regarding the formatting and consistency of these papers. He requested that, at the start of the next FY, agreement be reached on a revised template and process to be followed. The template should fit the process of applications from the perspective of funding teams, while also providing an effective summation of key elements to support Committee Members' decisions. He encouraged ESLT to draw on Committee Members' experience and perspectives to inform the new template and ensure it presented the information they needed to see.

ACTION: Emma Corrigan, Jon Eastwood

- 3.12. The Chair acknowledged improvements made to regional updates within the paper, recognising the significant work undertaken by authors.

Latest Financial Position

Mike Bates joined the meeting.

- 3.13. The presentation provided at Annex A summarised the portfolio's financial position.
- 3.14. Grant awards were in line with budget, with a delay in payments to The Phoenix Way being offset by increases elsewhere, The year-end positions on Operating Costs and Income were also looking likely. Mike highlighted that the figures presented did not include the NLDF release of £309m agreed by Board in December, £222m of which would be allocated to England with £72m to be committed and spent in the next FY.
- 3.15. The Chair queried whether this release would have implications for the projects Committee would be looking at, and what it might result in for grant budget and the profile of spending next FY. Directors assured Committee that the directorate was considering this carefully, particularly in the context of business planning, and would

be bringing proposals to Members in February which presented ESLT's ideas regarding how the additional spend requirements could be linked with the ambitions of the new portfolio and strategy.

- 3.16. Following the changed approach to phasing down Reaching Communities funding, Committee Members noted there would be a dramatic drop-off and queried how this would be managed and communicated to recipients given there was an increased level of demand. ESLT confirmed that a paper looking at this in more detail would be brought to the February strategy meeting, and advised that the anticipated trajectory would no longer see as considerable a drop-off in the next FY. Communications would be picked up as part of messaging regarding criteria changes in the Spring.
- 3.17. The Chair thanked Mike and his team for the smooth trajectory presented at year-end, noting this was only possible due to hard work undertaken by finance colleagues year-round.

Mike Bates left the meeting.

4. REVIEW OF ENGLAND COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE 2024

- 4.1. The paper summarised the ongoing review of the Terms of Reference (ToR) for all Country Committees. The updated England Committee ToR were attached for Committee's consideration and, subject to their feedback and recommendation to approve, would be presented to Board at their March 2025 meeting.
- 4.2. Phil highlighted two specific changes for Committee's attention: the inclusion of the Isle of Man under England Committee's remit; and the addition of a Youth Voice Representative to Committee membership.
- 4.3. The Committee were content to RECOMMEND the Terms of Reference FOR APPROVAL by Board. The Chair reported that going forward the Board would be taking a closer interest in the scheme of delegations across the Fund.

5. GRANT VARIATIONS & FUNDING DECISIONS *Section 5 is Commercially Sensitive - S43(2)*

- 5.1. Grant Variations and Funding decisions are restricted and can be found in Annex A.
- 5.2. In line with the interest declared under 2.3, Karin Woodley disconnected from the meeting for the duration of Committee's discussion regarding the application from Cambridge House.

6. REFLECTIONS

- 6.1. The Chair noted there had been some discrepancy in how quickly Committee had considered and reached decisions regarding funding applications, and Committee felt this reflected the difference in quality and consistency of reports presented to them. Where information was easy to interpret and correlated with the narrative of the assessing officer, discussion time was reduced. They also acknowledged that detailed budgetary information shouldn't be needed to reach a decision, but the high-level figures provided needed to add up. ESLT acknowledged this feedback and committed to addressing these issues under the action raised at paragraph 3.12.
- 6.2. Matthew and Daria were asked for their reflections following their first Committee meeting. They were pleased to have seen brilliant projects being awarded funding,

and offered feedback regarding the benefit of being able to place projects in the bigger picture and wider sector context, particularly in order to support the portfolio in delivering its ambitions around impact. They offered reflections on the Q&A spreadsheet as a mechanism for providing feedback ahead of meetings, and the positioning of sustainability as a priority across a number of projects.

6.3. There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 3.16pm.