



## MINUTES OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON FRIDAY 11 OCTOBER 2024 @ 10:00 am

IN ATTENDANCE	
Paul Sweeney	<i>NI Chair</i>
Kate Clifford	<i>NI Committee member</i>
Cara Cash-Marley	<i>NI Committee member (from 10:45)</i>
Anne-Marie McClure	<i>NI Committee member</i>
Norman McKinley	<i>NI Committee member (10:00-11:00)</i>
Kate Beggs	<i>NI Director</i>
Alison Fraser	<i>Senior Head of Funding</i>
Amanda Doherty	<i>Senior Head of Communications &amp; Engagement</i>
Nuala Macauley	<i>Funding Manager - Eastern (for items 4 - 6)</i>
Mark Creaney	<i>Funding Manager - Southern (for items 4 - 6)</i>
Gillian Irvine	<i>Funding Manager - North-Western (for items 4 - 6)</i>
Claire Meighan	<i>Knowledge &amp; Learning Manager (for item 7)</i>
Eileen McKibbin	<i>Senior Evaluation Manager (for item 7)</i>
Jacqui Maxwell	<i>Governance Officer - Minutes</i>

### 1. OPENING REMARKS:

#### 1.1 Chair's Welcome & Verbal Updates

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed all.

#### ***Updates were reported as follows:***

- Kate Clifford had been officially re-appointed as a Northern Ireland committee member for a further 3 years - (1 February 2025 to 31 January 2028).
- The amount of work and planning involved in organising the recent Strengthening Communities programme launch was acknowledged.
- The September Board meeting had taken place in the Newcastle office.
- The Dormant Strategic decision meeting timings for Friday 25 October will be confirmed later today. ***ACTION: J. Maxwell***
- The Board & Country Committees meeting was confirmed for Wednesday 13 November.
- NI committee member flights to Birmingham will be sourced and booked next week. ***ACTION: J. Maxwell***

#### 1.2 NI Director Verbal Updates

#### ***Kate updated as follows:***

- New UK-wide staff appointments - People and Culture Director and Chief of Staff.
- Youth Voice - recruitment was in progress for a young person to be appointed to the NI committee. They will firstly undertake 6 months training on the Board Boost programme before joining the committee in Spring 2025.

- The NI committee terms of reference will be amended accordingly and be included in the 6 December business meeting agenda for review. **ACTION K. Beggs/J. Maxwell**
- National Lottery Distribution Fund - we will be recommending to Board in December that additional monies be drawn down for the new financial year and we need to think strategically how best to use the the extra funding.
- Dormant Assets - the SQW Dormant Assets NI evaluation webinar will be held next Wednesday 16 October. The content will focus on both the themes of effective practice as well as wider learning around the emerging outcomes/impacts of the programme and challenges/enablers experienced. It will also cover evaluation next steps.
- Dormant Funding - Department for Finance options for next steps including figures, will be circulated to NIC. **ACTION K. Beggs**

## 2. GOVERNANCE: (Chair & J. Maxwell)

### 2.1 Apologies

Nick Garbutt, NI Committee member.

#### 2.2.1 Conflicts of Interest

Kate Clifford declared a non-disqualifiable interest relating to the Access to Resilience programme and the Rural Community Network being named as a partner in a number of the applications.

### 2.3 Previous Minutes

The minutes from the 16 August 2024 business meeting were formally agreed.

### 2.4 Actions List

The actions list was noted.

### 2.5 NIC Meetings Timetable 2024

The timetable was noted.

- 2.5.1 NI committee meeting dates from April 2025 to March 2026 will be suggested and confirmed as soon as possible. **ACTION J. Maxwell/K. Beggs/NI Chair**

## 3. COMMUNICATIONS REPORT - (A. Doherty)

### 3.1 Committee noted the Communications report for August to September

The main headlines were as follows:

- Media
- Digital
- Engagement

- 3.2 The Chair highlighted the National Lottery's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary Joint Distributor event in Stormont and that members should save this date in their calendars (4 March 2025).

## 4. PORTFOLIO UPDATES - (A. Fraser)

### 4.1 Portfolio Data:

- Committee noted the figures for Awards for All; People and Communities and Empowering Young People.

4.2 Pipeline & Decision Meetings:

- Committee noted application numbers and the planned decision meetings.

5. **LOCAL TEAM AREAS - Discussion on Key Insights and Outreach Plans**

(N. Macauley, M. Creaney, G. Irvine).

5.1 Gillian gave an overarching overview:

- Awards for All - (success rates; types of applications; type of funding requested; average grant size and length).
- Issues affecting VCSE - (Government cuts; lack of other funding; how to share knowledge and succession planning).
- Issues affecting communities - (poverty; inequality; addiction; abuse; loneliness; low education; paramilitarism; refugees and asylum seekers).

5.2 The Funding Managers reported on each of their local teams - Eastern; Southern and North-Western. Committee noted both the commonalities and the specific issues each team was currently facing.

5.3 The main discussion points were as follows:

- i) The Chair acknowledged the great work of the Funding Officers and the on the ground relationships they had developed.
- ii) We meet communities where they are and ask where they want to get to.
- iii) We need a path for people who are ready to be skilled up.
- iv) Low education attainment is a concern and needs the earliest intervention.
- v) A lot of funding has been invested in certain communities, but problems still exist.
- vi) It is hard for groups to retain staff when only able to offer short-term contracts and people are moving to longer term employment opportunities.

6. **STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES PROGRAMME (A. Fraser, N. Macauley, M. Creaney, G. Irvine)**

6.1 **Assessment Reports**

Committee noted the sample Strengthening Communities Assessment Report.

6.2 The main discussion points were as follows:

i) **Reports:**

- Committee agreed that all funding requests coming to decision meetings should be scored fundable.
- Committee agreed that shortening the reports would be helpful and to not repeat headings - (sometimes less means more).
- The reports should detail what is distinctive and show the added value, but also indicate what needs to be strengthened.
- Committee respected the Funding Team's endorsements, but the reports need to be clear to strike a content balance thus helping to make informed decisions.
- Officers will come back to committee with some further ideas on how the reports could be structured.

**ACTION: A. Fraser**

ii) **Programme:**

- It was agreed that it would be preferable for an organisation to have almost finished their People & Communities or Empowering Young People grant before applying to Strengthening Communities.
- However, it was also recognised that some organisations may be the best placed to deliver a different project that meets with the priorities of the Strengthening Communities programme and therefore judgement will need to be applied.

## 7. IMPACT STRATEGY - (C. Meighan & E. McKibbin)

7.1 This paper informed Committee on progress and plans and outlined the proposed focus of the strategy.

### 7.2 *Committee was invited to:*

- Note the plans and engagement to develop the Fund's Impact Strategy.
- Discuss the proposed focus and structure of the strategy.
- Contribute their views as to the commitments we should make in each area as an organisation and what things are of particular importance for committee to see addressed.

### 7.3 The main discussion points were as follows:

- i) The strategy will be presented at the 5 December Board for approval.
- ii) In two years-time, committee would like to begin see the following:

- Communities being strengthened and transformed.
- A legacy with sustained impact and shared effectively.
- Able to demonstrate what does and does not work.
- A missions and outcomes framework built into new programmes.
- Capturing impact at visits, changing agendas to include impact, and referencing outcomes and missions more prominently in assessment reports for decision making.
- UK-wide learning for communities.
- Enable practice to policy for a good outcome of the strategy.
- Being able to identify a clear starting point (baseline measures) that would help Committee assess where we are now and where we might be in 2/5 years-time.
- Data being easily collected, processed and communicated
- Be clear on what we want to see in evaluations for the benefit of both the Lottery and grant holders and ensure the process is accessible and understandable.
- Bring grant holders together to learn together (e.g. use the successful Supporting Families learning event format).
- Use numerous ways to evaluate, e.g. podcasts and videos, rather than reams of written reports.
- Strike a balance of the human voice and the written word and take into consideration that people have less time to read long reports.
- Keep things simple, use qualitative and quantitative data along with case studies, but we also need to be authentic and rigorous in terms of research and we have captured unintended consequences.
- There are a number of grant holders who would need support to start collecting evidence because they are more focused on delivery. Encourage organisations with those skills to share with others.
- Understand what new information requirements emerge (for NI Committee) and how any new national technology solution that is proposed in time, will meet our needs (*for accessible, key insights and learnings*).

#### ***By 2030 NIC would want to see:***

- Progress made in leading the agenda - practice to policy.
- See quantifiable impact being reported on - the 'what then' (or 'so what') beyond knowing about reach.
- See evidence of the sustained impact of our funding beyond the amount of money invested and project delivery.
- Know what we have done to build cohesion and stronger communities (in NI, the new programme is called Strengthening Communities).

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS:

8.1 Next Meetings:

- Dormant Strategic decision meetings - Monday 21 & Friday 25 Oct (*Paul, Cara, Nick*).
- Board & Country Committees meeting - Wednesday 13 November in Birmingham.
- NIC business meeting - Friday 6 December.
- NIC decision meeting - Friday 13 December.

8.2 Meeting Agendas:

It was agreed that going forward, agenda items will be included to allow for members feedback from the Climate Action Fund Panel and UK Fund Panel meetings.

**ACTION: J. Maxwell/A-M. McClure/N. McKinley**

*The meeting finished @ 2pm.*

*Paul Sweeney .*

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Paul Sweeney, NI Chair*

Date: 21 February 2025