



**MINUTES OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ON FRIDAY 10 FEBRUARY 2023 @ 10:00 am**

NI Committee	
Paul Sweeney	<i>NI Chair</i>
Cara Cash-Marley	<i>NI Committee member</i>
Nick Garbutt	<i>NI Committee member</i>
Norman McKinley	<i>NI Committee member</i>
Hannah Sankannawar	<i>Boardroom Apprentice</i>
Staff	
Kate Beggs	<i>NI Director</i>
Alison Fraser	<i>Senior Head of Funding</i>
Amanda Doherty	<i>Senior Head of Comms & Engagement</i>
Michael Liggett	<i>Head of Knowledge & Learning</i>
Stuart Fisher	<i>Finance Director</i>
Carrie Deacon	<i>Strategy Renewal (for item 5)</i>
Jenny Fitzgerald	<i>Funding Manager (for item 6)</i>
Jacqui Maxwell	<i>Governance Officer</i>

1. Opening Remarks:

1.1 Chair's Welcome & Updates

- The Chair welcomed Stuart Fisher, Finance Director and introductions were made.
- The NIC Away Day was confirmed for 15 & 16 June and two venues were being considered. It was agreed that staff would have a conversation outside of the meeting and decide on the preferred option. Facilitation, agenda items and further arrangements will be confirmed in due course.

1.2 NI Director Updates

- Three new Funding Officers have joined the team and completed their inductions.
- The NI Directorate is finalising the 2023/24 business plan and budgets.

2. Governance:

2.1 Apologies

These had been received from:

- Kate Clifford, NI committee member
- Anne-Marie McClure, NI committee member
- Norrie Breslin, Head of Knowledge & Learning
- Ajuma Salifu, Youth Voice Team

2.2 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

2.3 Previous Minutes

The minutes from the 9 December 2022 business meeting were formally agreed.

2.4 Actions List

The updated actions list was noted.

2.5 NIC Meetings Timetable 2023/24

Members noted the updated timetable and dates were confirmed.

3. **Project Visits Reflections:**

- 3.1 Nick Garbutt and Cara Cash-Marley gave feedback on their recent visits and commented that the preparation and briefing note materials supplied to them pre-visits were excellent and a great support.
- 3.2 Nick fed back on his visits to U-Hub Therapy Centre and the Advantage Foundation (Empowering Young People) and Bangor Foodbank (People and Communities). He reported that all three projects had provided great insights and learning experiences.
- 3.3 Cara reported back on her attendance at a consultation event in the Belvoir Hub. Conversations were very open about what people were experiencing and their capacity concerns.
- 3.4 Amanda confirmed that a project visits plan will be arranged for members, covering all programmes and various types of projects. This was a great opportunity for members to see what is being funded on the ground and observe the local grant making approach in action, in preparation for NIC discussions about the future shape of our funding in June.

ACTION: A. Doherty

Members asked how insight from project visits is shared across countries and were given an outline of the work of the Knowledge and Learning team to build the Knowledge Bank, as well as the pattern of Board visits to countries and regions. The UK-wide Impact Analysis will be circulated for information.

4. **Portfolio Updates:**

4.1 NI Portfolio, Pipeline Reports & Customer Satisfaction Results - (Alison Fraser)

4.1.1 ***Awards for All***

- An increase in demand, which was partly due to the fact that grant holders can now apply for up to £10K at a time and up to £20K in total in any 12-month period and there has also been a peak in demand for King's Coronation celebratory funding.
- We are reviewing the size of AfA grants as part of the strategy renewal.
- Committee noted how local team working makes an impact in relation to the cold spots and geographical spread.

4.1.2 ***Empowering Young People & People and Communities***

- An increase in demand and the cost-of-living uplifts have impacted on the figures.

4.1.3 ***Programme Pipeline***

- Committee commented on the healthy list of projects and noted that the number of telephone and email enquiries had increased over the past couple of months. Committee recognised the time and resources required to keep the pipeline up-to-date.
- Committee were reminded that the pipeline was an opportunity for members to identify any potential conflicts of interest at an early stage.

4.1.4 **Customer Satisfaction**

- Committee noted the NI Customer Satisfaction report for Q's 2 & 3 in 2022.
- NI scored the highest in the UK at 95% and it was evident that the local team relationship approach was working well.
- The Chair and committee commended the team on the excellent results.

5. Strategy Renewal - *Progress update:*

Carrie Deacon joined the meeting.

- 5.1 Paul welcomed Carrie to the Belfast office. He thanked her for taking the time to update the NI committee and commended her on the excellent work undertaken to date.
- 5.2 Carrie updated on the Strategy Renewal process to date, emphasising that the Deep Dives had tapped into expertise across the Fund and built on the insight from external consultation.
- 5.3 She presented the outline strategic framework, which is still being reviewed and refined by SMT and the Board sub-committee and set out the thematic priorities which have been emerging.
- 5.4 A proposal will go to Board at the end of March for sign-off. The strategy will be launched internally in May and externally in June. Organisational Improvement work will run along-side the implementation of the new strategy.
- 5.5 Kate commented that the timings suited well for discussion at the NI committee away day in June. This would be an opportunity for NIC to debate how the new strategy should shape our funding in Northern Ireland.
- 5.6 The main discussion points were as follows:
- a. Legislation dictates a funding formula that determines how Lottery income is allocated across the countries, using census and deprivation data. There is a desire for the Fund to help those who need it most.
 - b. Some of the main challenges will be the current stress on the Union, community empowerment model, and the difference between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK.
 - c. Sustainability can mean different things to communities, we are thinking of organisational and environmental sustainability. There should also be space to explore innovative and exciting ideas.
 - d. In relation to reducing overhead costs, the strategy has confirmed the need for a local grant making approach rather than a centralised model, (which would make the Fund less accessible). We need to understand how best to invest in resources, e.g., digital, people, technology and working effectively to justify the cost.
 - e. Regarding the four pillars - environmental sustainability; children and young people; health; and connected communities, the Fund will continue to have responsive capabilities and the space to prioritise outside of these.
 - f. We have a corpus of evidence, but we need to improve dissemination to influence more, understand our impact better, focus down on certain areas and tell our stories.
 - g. The strategic document will not be widely consulted on, it is a starting point and building on the things we think are important to communities. Countries can then decide on how to take it forward, via individual implementation plans and engagement. June is the platform to start discussions.
- 5.7 Paul thanked Carrie for taking the time to present to committee in person, which had generated a robust discussion, covering several important issues.

6. Dormant Accounts Fund update:

Jenny Fitzgerald, Funding Manager joined the meeting.

- 6.1 This paper updated on the design and operation of Dormant Accounts Fund NI to date and proposed next steps.

6.2 Recommendations:

The Committee was asked to:

- i) note the content of the attached paper and
- ii) discuss and agree the next steps as set out in Section 6.

6.3 The main discussion points were as follows:

- a. Committee's role on Dormant is not only to make decisions on the Strategic grants, but also to provide insight to inform the future development of the fund.
- b. The initial fund had been developed after extensive public consultation. We have begun a series of learning events and will commission an external evaluation once the first phase has closed in early March.
- c. The Department of Finance had provided revised policy directions for the expanded scheme, but it was not yet clear when money would begin to flow from that, given ongoing debates about policy directions for England. Stuart Fisher confirmed that it would be FY24/25 at the earliest.
- d. Members discussed the gap which has emerged for smaller organisations and the support we are planning to provide for network and member organisations. NIC welcomed the news that the Fund had been asked to sit on the DfC Programme Board for the transformation of sectoral infrastructure support.

6.4 Following discussions:

Committee agreed as detailed in paragraph 6.4 of the paper - Phase 2 Grant Programme:

- *We propose that we will develop a time limited grant programme focusing on membership and umbrella organisations.*

Committee agreed as detailed in paragraph 6.5 of the paper - Learning Plan:

- *We will develop plans for identifying the impact and learning from the grants awarded under the Dormant Accounts Fund and tender for an external evaluation.*

Committee agreed as detailed in paragraph 6.6 of the paper - Scheme Expansion:

- *We will develop plans to engage with the sector to inform the development of the expanded scheme.*

6.5 Paul suggested that it would be beneficial to appoint a Dormant Accounts lead committee member. **ACTION: Chair/NIC**

7. Participatory Grant Making: Funding for Diverse Ethnic Communities - Next Steps:
(Kate Beggs)

7.1 **SUMMARY:** Next steps in our engagement with people from diverse ethnic backgrounds in Northern Ireland, following our participatory grant-making pilot programme.

7.2 **Recommendation**

The Committee is invited to:

- Note and discuss the contents of the paper and
- Agree the next steps set out at para 3.8 below.

7.3 ***Committee agreed not to run a second round of the PGM pilot.***

7.4 ***Considering the above, Committee agreed the proposed next steps as follows:***

- We will ensure that the learning from the first stage of the PGM pilot about barriers informs the review process.
- We will continue to build our stakeholder networks through the Steering Group.

- We will explore options for employing or procuring support for a specific project to ensure that we are fully informed of the needs of diverse communities in Northern Ireland.
- We will expand stakeholder networks, further explore barriers, capacity and infrastructure needs in different ethnic communities and identifying and delivering cultural competence training for the whole team.
- We will ensure recruitment opportunities in the team continue to be advertised through the Steering Group and stakeholder networks.
- We will use our communications channels and contacts to highlight good news stories.

7.5 Kate confirmed that a PGM deep dive had been completed under the strategy renewal process and this can be re-visited at the NI committee Away Day.

8. Strategic Finance Briefing:

8.1 Stuart Fisher presented as follows:

- The Finance Directorate - (Finance; Risk; Audit & Investigations; Procurement; Controls Assurance Team).
- Lottery income
- Sales analysis
- Income risk
- Grant allocations
- Overheads
- Liquidity
- NLDF balance risk
- Fund wide award & payment performance
- NI Portfolio; grant making and payment trends activity; future forecasting

8.2 Committee noted there was an excellent two-way dialogue between the NI Funding Team and the Finance Business Partner.

8.3 Paul thanked Stuart for taking the time to attend in person and giving such a comprehensive and interesting presentation.

9. Any Other Business:

9.1 Next Meetings:

- P&C/EYP decision meeting - Fri 24 March
- NIC business meeting - Fri 21 April

The meeting finished @ 2:00 pm



Signed: _____
Paul Sweeney, NI Chair

Date: 21 April 2023