



**MINUTES OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ON FRIDAY 8 APRIL 2022 @ 10:00 am**

NI Committee/Boardroom Apprentice	
Paul Sweeney	<i>NI Chair</i>
Charles Mack	<i>NI Committee member</i>
Kate Clifford	<i>NI Committee member</i>
Nick Garbutt	<i>NI Committee member</i>
Shaun Kennedy	<i>Boardroom Apprentice (Observer)</i>
Staff	
Alison Fraser	<i>Senior Head of Funding</i>
Amanda Doherty	<i>Senior Head of Comms & Engagement</i>
Norrie Breslin	<i>Head of Knowledge & Learning</i>
Michael Liggett	<i>Head of Knowledge & Learning</i>
David Knott	<i>CEO (for items 7 & 8)</i>
Emma Ackerman	<i>Funding Strategy Director (for items 7 & 8)</i>
Jacqui Maxwell	<i>Governance Officer</i>

1. Opening Remarks

1.1 Chair's Welcome & Updates

The Chair updated attendees on Kate Beggs's recovery and that it was hoped she will return in May on a phased return and attend the May NIC away day. All of which will be dependent on medical advice. He acknowledged and thanked NISMT and staff who had maintained business as usual.

1.2 The Chair confirmed there had been good progress regarding the appointment and initial training of the new cohort of eight young people, now known as the Youth Voice Team.

1.3 He commended staff on the quality of the papers and gave a brief overview of the papers and the meeting format. Amanda Doherty confirmed that a member of the Strategic Review Team will be available to meet directly with committee, during the May away day.

1.4 Committee noted that the UK Chair, Blondel Cluff will be visiting Northern Ireland on 16th and 17th May and David Knott CEO on the 25th (more details to follow on both).

2. Governance

2.1 Apologies

2.1.1 These had been received from Sandra McNamee and Cara Cash-Marley NI committee members and Kate Beggs NI Director.

2.2 Declarations of Interest

2.2.1 There were none.

2.3 Previous Minutes

2.3.1 The minutes from the 11 February 2022 meeting were formally agreed.

2.4 NIC Meetings Timetable 2022

2.4.1 Members noted the updated timetable and that the 12 August meeting date will stand. (*Committee noted Kate Clifford's apology for the meeting*). The 10 June decision meeting will start at 10am and the finish time will depend on the number of applications.

2.5 NIC Terms of Reference

2.5.1 Committee noted and agreed the updated wording.

2.5.2 On the suggestion of Kate Clifford, committee agreed to consider the co-opted option mentioned in paragraph 2.3 of the terms of reference, and the Chair agreed to follow this up with the Corporate Governance Team. ***ACTION: Chair***

2.6 Committee Away Day

2.6.1 Members noted the current arrangements, timings and venue. More details will follow in due course. ***ACTION: J. Maxwell***

3. **Microsoft 365**

3.1 Committee noted the previous email and logging-on instructions. A discussion took place regarding cyber security, best practice and authentication.

3.2 It was agreed that this would be considered further before committee started to use their National Lottery email addresses. The Fund's IT department would be contacted to reassure and confirm protocols, probably via a separate bespoke session. ***ACTION: NISMT***

3.3 Charles Mack suggested external training for committee and will email a link of an organisation who specialises in awareness training. ***ACTION: C. Mack***

4. **Portfolio Updates**

4.1 NI Portfolio & Pipeline Reports

Committee noted both reports.

4.2 The following points were highlighted:

- There had been a drop in demand for Awards for All for this financial year, which was probably due to groups hibernating during COVID. Local funding teams were continuing outreach work.
- Empowering Young People and People & Communities application data was considered.
- The pipeline report showed the applications coming to the 10 June decision making committee, currently standing at 20, but this may change.
- The Chair reported to committee, that people with disability as a theme in applications, was low in England, but it was the opposite in Northern Ireland, which was viewed positively by committee.

Some questions posed:

- How do identify good applications/ideas in areas not included in the pipeline i.e. cold spots?
- Regarding mental health, how do we ensure the quality of counsellors working with groups in the projects we fund, which are currently in very high demand?
- Are we overlapping with the Public Health Agency and do we need more co-ordination? (Amanda Doherty confirmed that the Fund has been engaging with the PHA).

- Is early preventative work e.g. Men's Sheds our area of expertise?
- Aligning our priorities around health, strategic interventions and social prescribing can be further discussed at the NIC away day.
- Committee commented on the Funding Officers excellent work in bringing projects forward to the pipeline and that there was a good geographical spread across NI, for both rural and urban areas.

5. B.A.M.E. Participatory Grant Making Pilot (*paper 15*)

5.1 Committee noted the report.

5.2 *The main discussion points were as follows:*

- There had been a high number of successful applications, some of which we had no previous relationship with.
- A number of the unsuccessful projects may re-apply through our other programmes.
- Committee were really impressed with the quick turnaround from the conception of the pilot and the formation of the decision-making panel.
- It was agreed that this programme could be a perfect example of when to call in expertise, through the co-opted committee member option.
- Regarding some of the successful projects governance robustness, relevant grant management processes will be factored in by the Funding Officers.
- We need to consider the barriers for applicants (e.g. refugees) with regards to person verification, when not in possession of a passport or diving licence.
- The Chair stated his appreciation on the excellent work carried out by Sara Houston, Amanda Pawar, the staff decision panel members, (Linnet Alexander, Ashleigh Currie and David Mulholland) and the funding team.
- **Next steps** - after the period of sensitivity, successful projects will be announced. We will consider the lessons learnt from the pilot and discussions will take place with committee on next steps.

6. Communications Report

6.1 Committee noted the report for Feb-Mar 22, which covered the following headings:

- Media and digital highlights
- Grant announcements
- Customer engagement
- Public Affairs

6.2 *The main discussion points were as follows:*

- As per the NI environment plan, relevant changes had been made on the Fund's Awards for All web pages regarding the wider environmental impact.
- NI entered the pre-election period of sensitivity one week before the rest of the UK and there will be less communications/engagement work undertaken in April & May.
- Grant announcements will pick up again after May and project visits and any face-to-face engagement work can start to be arranged for the Chair and committee members from June onwards.
- The Chair thanked the communications team for always preparing him to the highest standard for meetings and project visits and he felt very well supported.

(David Knott, CEO and Emma Ackerman Funding Strategy Director joined the meeting @ 11:30).

7. Chief Executive Officer Overview

7.1 David briefed members on his previous background.

7.2 He also covered:

- The Fund has started a conversation with the communities we are serving across the UK and listening to the hopes, ambitions as well as the numerous challenges.

- We want to grow our reach and impact, but we can't solve all the current problems.
- The hope is that there will be some big ideas coming through by way of these conversations.
- We will consider the way we tell our stories and relate to and thank the National Lottery players.

7.3 The main discussion points were as follows:

- In relation to interventions, what actually works and how do we demonstrate that?
- The Fund's Impact Report from late last year, shows the characteristics and common themes of our funding.
- The conversation is never ending on how we impact positively on communities.
- The Fund has created frameworks for charities to not use their energy to compete but to collaborate and solve challenges together.
- Partnerships will be key going forward and people being able to trust institutions.
- Conversations are being unlocked through social media to help with reaching out, networking and partnering up.
- Awards for All has enabled organisations to start a journey.
- The policy and funding environment in respect of state and non-state is constantly evolving.
- Important for the Fund to understand and recognise the context of need in the months and years ahead and know its role.

8. Strategic Framework Renewal and NI Portfolio Review

8.1 Strategic Framework Renewal

8.1.1 Emma Ackerman briefed members as follows:

- **The Why** - context we are living in post COVID and the cost of living rise. Rediscover our role as a community funder and public body and to add value to the state. Have a shared purpose.
- **The How** - ensure its as inclusive as possible, starting with a consultation (larger and wider) to invite ideas, thoughts and considerations. Engaging with the previous unreached. We need greater clarity on our direction and strategic priorities.
- **The What** - thinking more consciously about the difference we can make and what matters to communities to make the biggest impact and be a responsive funder.

8.1.2 The main discussion points were as follows:

- Agency means not doing to, but empowering and enabling communities.
- We should not fund what we know doesn't work.
- There are many regional differences and politics. How is this navigated?
- The legislation states we are a UK wide organisation but we devolve funding responsibilities through policy directions in each devolved administration. We can look at the larger interventions that are common across the UK - (e.g. environment, children and young people) and the transcending missions that unite us across local reach.
- What are the interventions that work in different parts of the world, we need to look outward and consider the evidence.
- We will be curious and learn, but it also works both ways and we have shared our successes with other countries.
- We want to be world class and the very best, so we need to be much more intentional in this area.

8.2 NI Portfolio Review (*paper 16*)

8.2.1 Committee noted the paper and plan.

8.2.2 The Chair, Amanda Doherty and Norrie Breslin set the context for discussion and asked committee to revisit the questions, around themes and our role.

8.2.3 The main points of discussion were as follows:

- We are in era of huge flux and there are massive challenges ahead around the various funding pots the instability of the NI Executive.
- We are seeking to design a portfolio in difficult times, with a lot of uncertainty.
- We can only manage what we can manage and the sector is coping with huge pressures.
- The new portfolio needs to have agility and flexibility to be able to adapt to future changes.

(The Chair concluded this part of the discussion by thanking both David and Emma for addressing the committee today).

8.2.4 The Chair commended Norrie and Michael on the in-depth Portfolio Review paper.

Some further points were made:

- A framework will be constructed for the May away day.
- It would be very beneficial for committee members to be present at the future stakeholder engagement sessions and we will be in touch with more details.
- We have reviewed the UK impact data report and produced a report from this, regarding the value of the Awards for All programme in NI, which committee will find useful.
- In relation to project evaluations, do we need to consider this further, how it operates, how the information produced is used and the value for money?
- How is impact and evaluation measured and encouraged and how is it captured for the Fund?
- What we do, we do well, and the Fund largely gets it right.
- The Fund should be proactive, take the lead and be more directional on sharing good practice.
- If are are any issues committee would like to raise before the away day that need bespoke papers, these need to be requested over the next couple of weeks.

8.2.5 The Chair stated that Shaun Kennedy had produced some thoughts on evaluation and it was agreed that more discussion was needed on this topic.

9. Any Other Business

9.1 Next Meetings

- Strategic Away Day Thursday 19/Fri 20 May
- P&C and EYP decision meeting 10 June

9.2 The Chair thanked all attendees for their input and the constructive discussions.

The meeting finished @ 1:00 pm



Signed: _____
Paul Sweeney, NI Chair

Date: 12 August 2022