



**MINUTES OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ON FRIDAY 12 AUGUST 2022 @ 10:00 am**

NI Committee/Boardroom Apprentice	
Paul Sweeney	<i>NI Chair</i>
Sandra McNamee	<i>NI Committee member</i>
Charles Mack	<i>NI Committee member</i>
Nick Garbutt	<i>NI Committee member</i>
Shaun Kennedy	<i>Boardroom Apprentice (observer until 11:30)</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>
Jenny Fitzgerald	<i>Funding Manager (from 11:45 & item 9)</i>
Mark Creaney	<i>Funding Manager (from 11:45 & item 10)</i>
Jacqui Maxwell	<i>Governance Officer</i>

1. Opening Remarks

1.1 Welcome & Updates - (Chair)

- **Kate Beggs** - will hopefully return to work at the start of September. He acknowledged and thanked NISMT, John Rose and staff who had maintained business as usual since February.
- **Committee member recruitment** - waiting on Ministerial approval to appoint two new members and offer letters will then be issued. The new members will be invited to attend and observe the 7 October business meeting as part of their induction. They will officially take up their posts from 1 November for four years and replace Sandra McNamee and Charles Mack, who finish their seven-year terms on 31 October.
- **June UK Board** - had attended in person. October UK Board will be in Scotland, details and dates to be confirmed.

1.2 Directorate Updates - (A. Fraser/A. Doherty)

- **Staff survey** - NI staff engagement figures had significantly dropped to just over 30%. John Rose engaged with all NI staff in July to gather more insight on the reasons why. From this information, NISMT will be developing a local Action Plan.
- **Strategic framework renewal** - organisation transformational project has started
- **New Strategy Communications and Insight Director** - interviews have taken place
- **Website** - maintenance ongoing. Digital application platform to be introduced by end of November.
- **Stakeholder engagement** - NI stakeholder paper will go to the October business meeting.
ACTION: A. Doherty

1.2.1 Committee commented that it was challenging to implement a substantial strategic change programme, whilst having a background of declining staff morale. Committee also thought there was a lot of change happening at the same time.

2. Governance

2.1 Apologies

These had been received from Kate Clifford and Cara Cash-Marley NI committee members.

2.2 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

2.3 Previous Minutes

The minutes from the 8 April business meeting and the 19/20 May away day were formally agreed.

2.4 Actions List

The actions list was noted.

- *Change of wording - Page 2 Point 2.3 should read - PAC/EYP are “transitioning” at the end of March 23.*

2.4.1 **Youth Voice Team** - Norrie Breslin updated on developments in our new way of working with young people, using a UK approach, led by Joe Rich, Head of Youth Voice. There will be two youth voice members recruited to attend the NIC business and decision-making meetings and they will be remunerated appropriately. ***ACTION: N. Breslin***

2.4.2 Committee agreed that young people have a big stake in the future and need to be included in committee business over the next two years. It was a credit to the NI staff team that young people had been involved with the NI committee over a number of years.

2.5 NIC Meetings Timetable 2022

Members noted the timetable up to December 2022. 2023 dates will be suggested and confirmed as soon as possible. ***ACTION: J. Maxwell***

3. **Communications Report - (Amanda Doherty)**

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

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

3.2 Committee noted the very busy period since the last report and commended the team on the excellent work and activity covered.

3.3 Autumn Project Visits - committee noted the suggested project visit list. Committee agreed to email Joanie Arthurs to arrange. The Chair would also welcome any project visit suggestions from committee. ***ACTION: NIC***

4. **Portfolio Updates**

4.1 NI Portfolio & Pipeline Reports - (Alison Fraser)

Committee noted both reports.

4.2 Demand is high for both People & Communities and Empowering Young People and we will be keeping an eye on budgets, engagement and cold spots.

5. **Portfolio Review (paper 17 - Norrie Breslin)**

This paper presented what was heard in the discovery phase of the Portfolio Review and outlined the next steps in the process.

5.1 NI Committee was invited to:

- Note and discuss the contents of the paper
- Endorse the next steps outlined on page six of this paper

5.2 *The main discussions points were as follows:*

- The level of engagement and asking people what they think was impressive.
- Interesting report with no surprises, endorses the way we work and reflects committee discussions.
- Rich and robust evidence that what we are doing is actually working.
- The paper reflects the tension of immediate versus longer term responses and impacts.
- Communities need room to form their vision and through convening, we need to bring people together and encourage talking and sharing.

5.3 *Committee endorsed the next steps on page 6 of the paper.*

6. **Boardroom Apprentice**

6.1 Sandra McNamee thanked Shaun Kennedy for the time he had invested during his 12 months as the Boardroom Apprentice. Shaun thanked everyone for their support and commented on how much he had gained from the experience. He especially thanked Sandra for being a very supportive Boardroom Buddy. The committee wished him well in the future and looked forward to welcoming the new apprentice for 2022/23.

6.2 The induction process for the new Boardroom Apprentice Hannah Sankannawar will be arranged for late August/early September. ***ACTION J. Maxwell***

(Shaun Kennedy left the meeting. Jenny Fitzgerald and Mark Creaney joined the meeting).

7. **Strategy Renewal - (Amanda Doherty)**

7.1 Committee noted the verbal update and the tabled Phase 2 exploration areas document.

7.2 Committee also noted the following:

- We are hearing through our engagement is the same as responses across the UK.
- The document outlines the areas that we are exploring further through deep dives. This will be intensive work with each team led by a member of SMT.
- Committee to discuss further at the 7 October meeting and Carrie Deacon may attend.

ACTION: A. Doherty

8. **Cost of Living (paper 18 - Alison Fraser)**

The paper provided anecdotal information based on conversations with grant-holders and stakeholders about the impact of the current cost of living crisis on communities, grant holders and organisations. It contained proposals for a grant making response to these challenges for NI Committee to consider.

NI Committee was invited to:

- i) agree to offer uplifts of up to 10% to existing grant holders (Paras 5.1 and 5.2)
- ii) agree to update the wording on our standard programmes to reference the cost-of-living crisis and the types of projects we can fund (Paras 5.1 and 7)
- iii) note the financial implications of our response (Para 6)

8.1 *The main discussions points were as follows:*

- The 10% uplifts will not just be for salaries, but also for energy costs and service delivery.
- Need to be mindful of internal sensitivities as at this point there is no cost of living response as an employer.
- The funding officers have good relationships with grant holders and will manage expectations.

8.2 *Committee noted and endorsed the paper.*

9. **Dormant Accounts Update (paper 19 - Jenny Fitzgerald)**

This report contained the key learning from the delivery of Phase one of the Dormant Accounts Fund NI since the launch of the programme in January 2021.

NI Committee were invited to:

- i) Note and discuss the paper in the context of the next phase of the Dormant Accounts Fund and our portfolio review.
- ii) Note and discuss next steps.

9.1 *The main discussions points were as follows:*

- Committee members have witnessed the positive impact and investment on the ground.
- The strategic grants are very resource intensive in respect of due diligence work particularly if there is onward grant making.
- Need to explore the identified gaps with local teams and find out why they have not applied for Dormant funding.
- Funding Officers manage unsuccessful feedback well and can advise on re-applying, which is always appreciated.

9.2 *Committee endorsed the next steps on page 6 of the paper.*

10. **Environmental Top Ups Pilot (paper 20 - Mark Creaney)**

This paper provided an update on the Environmental Top Ups pilot, looking at what we learned from providing existing grant holders with renewable energy technology. This pilot was a key step towards achieving our corporate and local commitments to improving our environmental performance and that of our customers.

NI Committee are invited to:

- i) note and discuss the attached paper in the context of portfolio review and future funding development
- ii) note and discuss the paper as part of Fund's ongoing commitment to the environment and climate action.

10.1 *The main discussions points were as follows:*

- Committee commented on the valuable learning gathered from the pilot and we now know what works and what doesn't.
- There is a real need in the sector in relation to energy costs and keeping buildings open to serve their communities which links to the cost of living discussion.
- There is an option for a thematic programme in the new portfolio.
- Action Renewables were an excellent partner to support the pilot.

10.2 *Committee noted the success of the pilot programme, endorsed the next steps and will remain open to ongoing discussions in relation to an environment/climate focus in the new portfolio.*

10.3 *Committee requested an environmental deep dive at a future meeting.*

ACTION: A. Fraser

11. **Any Other Business**

11.1 Next Meetings

- P&C and EYP decision meeting - Friday 23 September
- Business meeting - Friday 7 October (*the two new committee members will be invited to observe*).

ACTION: Chair/J. Maxwell

11.2 The Chair thanked all attendees for their input and constructive discussions and thought that September will be the start of a busier period post the summer holidays.

The meeting finished @ 1:00 pm



Signed: _____
Paul Sweeney, NI Chair

Date: 7 October 2022