



**MINUTES OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND COMMITTEE UPDATE MEETING
HELD ON FRIDAY 16 OCTOBER 2020 @ 10:00 am
(VIA TEAMS)**

Committee:

Sandra McNamee	-	<i>Interim Chair</i>
Eileen Mullan	-	<i>NI committee member</i>
Charles Mack	-	<i>NI committee member</i>
Shannon Russell	-	<i>Boardroom Apprentice (observing)</i>

Staff:

Kate Beggs	-	<i>NI Director</i>
Dawn Austwick	-	<i>Chief Executive (from 11:00am)</i>
Alison Fraser	-	<i>Senior Head of Funding</i>
Amanda Doherty	-	<i>Senior Head of Communications & Engagement</i>
Norrie Breslin	-	<i>Head of Knowledge & Learning</i>
Michael Liggett	-	<i>Head of Knowledge & Learning</i>
Sara Houston	-	<i>Knowledge & Learning Manager (for item 5)</i>
Mark Creaney	-	<i>Funding Manager (for item 7)</i>
Jacqui Maxwell	-	<i>Business Support Officer - Governance</i>

1. Opening Remarks**1.1 Chair's Welcome**

Sandra welcomed all attendees and especially welcomed Shannon Russell the new Boardroom Apprentice. Shannon had met with Sandra, spoken to Kate and received governance induction documents from Jacqui. It was planned that she would meet with more staff in the coming weeks via Teams. Shannon updated attendees on her background and that she was delighted to have been chosen to be the Fund's Boardroom Apprentice until the end of August 2021.

1.2 NI Director's Feedback on Key Corporate Matters

Kate updated committee:

- NI Chair recruitment was ongoing and will close for applications on 23 October.
- We were still waiting on consent from the Department for Communities to launch the recruitment campaign for a new NI committee member, but Jacqui had prepared the documentation to be uploaded to the Fund's website after we receive the go ahead.
- The NI Portfolio was now starting to come out of the emergency funding phase relating to COVID, lessons had been learned and it was now time to consider the longer-term and broader approach.
- Work on Dormant Accounts was progressing, and the timeframe was to launch before the end of the year and be open to applications early January. Dormant will be for longer term funding but we recognise that people will still need short term financial assistance to help them through the COVID crisis.
- The Department for Communities still had a COVID-19 Charities Fund balance to commit and the Fund has been involved in conversations about options.

- The Fund's new Chief Executive recruitment campaign was now closed, and John Rose will be acting CEO until the new person is in post.
- The NI directorate had recently recruited a new Funding Officer Charlie Thomas, who will cover the Fermanagh and Omagh areas, where he has established connections.
- UKSMT has been considering the wellbeing of staff and the impact of working from home seven months on and counting. It was now apparent that staff will not be returning to the offices anytime soon, so we are looking at options to promote self-care.
- Locally it was important to take the necessary steps to be both supportive and flexible with staff for example to organise meetings outside of 12-2pm to allow staff to get out of their homes to get some daylight and exercise.
- Committee noted that a UK pulse survey had indicated that 97% of staff were satisfied with the support of their line manager, which was an excellent result.
- It was agreed that post COVID, the Fund will not be going back to the way it worked before and this was an opportunity to change how we work with each other in the future for the benefit of all.

2. Governance

2.1 Apologies

These had been received from Tony Doherty, NI committee member

2.2 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

2.3 Previous Minutes

The minutes from the 14 August meeting were agreed as accurate and will be signed by the Chair at a later date.

2.4 NIC Meetings Timetable & Forward Plan 20/21

Both were noted by committee.

3. Funding Updates (*NI Portfolio Overview Stats report; NI Programmes Pipeline Data report; COVID-19 Charities report*)

3.1 Alison updated committee:

- Funding had now reverted back to the three local area teams.
- Awards for All was open for business with virtual outreach sessions taking place and the budget should be spent by the end of the financial year.
- P&C and EYP budgets had been merged and the demand for EYP has reduced compared to last year.
- There was a healthy number of applications going to committee for the November's decision meeting (6/7 for P&C and 5 for EYP) and 6 delegated decisions had been made this week with all being funded.
- We are re-visiting the application pipeline and reviewing outreach plans.
- Technology seems to be a problem for some of the lower capacity groups, not being able to connect and submit on-line applications. This information is coming from the helper organisations and there is a reality that some groups need to connect face-to-face. We are also talking to other countries about what they are experiencing.

3.2 Committee commented:

- Members queried the reduction in EYP applications. Was it a natural slowing down and was there still a need for the programme?
- How do we manage the expectations for the large number of pipeline applications? We can't fund everyone.

- 3.3. Alison stated that a number of the pipeline applications will fall away naturally. Some will change to smaller amounts or pause to regroup because of the impact of COVID on their plans.
- 3.4 Committee noted the final COVID-19 Charities report and the amount of funding distributed. This programme had helped relationship building with smaller organisations that the Fund had been previously unaware of. Alison thanked committee for their time in attending the weekly decision meetings.
- 3.5 Sandra confirmed that the NIC strategic meeting on 30 October was very timely and the NI portfolio review will be discussed at length.

4. Portfolio Update - Transitional Funding Principles for P&C and EYP

- 4.1 The paper sets out transitional funding principles for our standard programmes up to the end of March 2021.

Committee were asked to:

- i) to note and discuss the attached paper
- ii) to note our revised corporate funding principles
- iii) to agree the transitional NI funding principles for People in the Lead, Core/Organisational costs and Partnerships.

- 4.2 Alison updated committee:
 - We have considered the learning from the COVID-19 Charities Fund delivery through the emergency response phase, all our funding will be delivered through a COVID lens and we have reflected on our decision making over the last 6 months.
 - People in the Lead is the key principle of what we do and is here to stay.
 - In the current context we need to consider what we mean by consultation and give more flexibility.
 - Regarding core costs, we will be as flexible as possible as a short-term measure to give time to help organisations survive and consider what they want to do longer term.
 - The core cost policy is being reviewed across the organisation but will allow for local flexibility. (Alison gave an example on how flexibility on core costs worked for a current grant holder).
 - Build on collaboration. GMS allows us to make partnership grants for P&C and EYP to individual partners rather than just the lead partner.

- 4.3 Committee commented:
 - This is a very clear paper and mirrors a lot of the discussions at committee's decision meetings.
 - The nature of consultations does need to change due to the pandemic.
 - Really like the new fund wide principles and the NI context.
 - Support the flexibility approach on core costs in the current climate as some organisations are volunteer led and need space.
 - We do have a role to try and get organisations to come together in partnership on a thematic approach and we need to encourage this way of working. The partnership needs to be right for all involved and not just coming together to access funding.

- 4.4 ***Committee agreed point iii) to agree the transitional NI funding principles for People in the Lead, Core/Organisational costs and Partnerships and will be discussed further at the committee strategic meeting on 30 October.***

5. Participatory Grant Making - BAME Communities

5.1 Sara Houston, Knowledge & Learning Manager joined the meeting.

5.2 This paper sets out an approach to funding that shifts decision making power to involve those communities that will be impacted by the decisions and is requesting Committee's approval in principle to progress a participatory grant making pilot with BAME communities.

5.3 Committee were asked to:

- i) note and discuss the content of the paper
- ii) to agree in principle to develop a participatory grant making pilot programme with BAME communities as outlined in section 3.

5.4 Sara updated committee:

- We have been considering this way of funding over the last couple of years, which initially started with the Clogher Valley event and the pre-paid cards.
- We have been working closely with colleagues across the fund and linking into what is happening UK-wide. Hannah Patterson from the UK Portfolio has been supporting us with this work on how we can develop in this area and she recently delivered a learning session to all staff, which was very interesting.
- There have been good conversations with BAME groups during the exploratory phase and we have developed our relationships.
- We will request expressions of interest and the pilot programme will be for a period of 18-24 months starting as soon as possible. Grants sizes to be considered further.
- Grant recipients will become decision makers in future rounds - rolling collective model.

5.5 Committee commented:

- Committee members were both excited and delighted about the pilot, which makes sense and is a good fit with the Corporate and EDI plans.
- We are being forward thinking, and committee look forward to seeing the outcomes of this progressive work.
- Members were keen to have regular updates and Sara confirmed this would be covered at business meetings under the EDI agenda item.
- Committee also thought it was good to be working with other funders on this.

5.6 *Committee agreed point ii) to agree in principle to develop a participatory grant making pilot programme with BAME communities as outlined in section 3.*

6. Chief Executive Update - Dawn Austwick joined the meeting @ 11:00am

6.1 Sandra welcomed Dawn to her final NIC meeting as she was leaving the Fund in December.

6.2 Dawn updated committee:

- An amazing amount of work had been achieved over the previous 6-7 months.
- We have allocated £400m Lottery and £200m emergency government funding, doubled the number of applications and grants made, all of which we should be very proud of.
- Since lockdown our systems have worked well, we have learnt that we don't always need to meet in person and have been able to increase attendee numbers at external virtual meetings via the web.
- We have produced lots of learning papers internally and externally.
- We have responded really well to EDI under Kate's leadership and we now have a set of actions to work towards, whilst opening up networks and building trust.

- There will be a very tough 6 months ahead during winter and people will have increased needs with less money. Lottery funding remains robust and hopefully this will continue, but there will be some difficult decisions to make and the sector will need to change.
- During the last 7 years we have witnessed events happening that no one could have predicted, so we need to be both flexible and adaptive and ensure that our systems and processes match the need.
- We have a role in helping the sector control it's destiny and there are younger people coming through with good ideas to be future leaders.
- We see the best and the worst of the sector across the UK and we can learn from the different areas.
- The Fund should encourage partnerships to be developed but they need to be robust, find a balance and a united purpose, which the Fund can nurture.

6.3 Dawn finished off by saying that she had very much enjoyed working with the Northern Ireland committee and staff and the Directorate knows its subject matter very well.

6.4 Sandra thanked Dawn for her update, she will be greatly missed and will leave behind an incredible legacy. Committee wished her the best for the future and asked that she keep in touch.

7. The Environment - NI Funding Next Steps

7.1 Mark Creaney, Funding Manager joined the meeting.

7.2 This paper was a follow-up to the paper presented at the 14 August meeting and considers how we can begin to work towards achieving our corporate and local commitments to improving our environmental performance and that of our customers.

7.3 Committee were asked to:

- i) Agree in principle that we continue to take positive steps to manage our own environmental performance.
- ii) Agree in principle that we develop an environmental top up programme for our existing grant holders.
- iii) Agree in principle to integrate our environmental commitments into our portfolio review and consider how we incorporate them into our current funding.

7.4 Mark updated committee:

- This paper provides an update from the previous meeting
- The Fund's carbon footprint has been reduced because of the COVID restrictions, and we need to consider how we can build on this.
- Need to consider how we can influence our grant holders and the sector locally on how they impact the environment and try to incentivise.
- We are planning to do something similar to Wales and their Climate Action Top-up programme for existing grant holders to upgrade by way of easy fixes for buildings in the heart of communities.
- This would be actioned through providing funding for small scale energy generation (e.g. solar panels, biomass boilers) which can be installed quickly and help to start conversations with communities.
- A support partner is required to help deliver the programme to provide organisations with the right support and guidance. The Fund's Procurement has advised this and will go out to tender and could be turned around by the end of December. We would then launch the programme in January 2021.
- We are suggesting a £200,000 pilot programme to come from the PAC and EYP standard programme budgets. Maximum grant size will be £10,000 and delivered using grant variations to existing grant holders.

7.5 Committee commented:

- This is very timely and a good fit with our corporate plan.
- There are certain planning restrictions to install solar panels and wind turbines and it may be hard for communities to get permission for these but acknowledged that it depends on the size and scale of the project and can be achievable.
- The support partner will give us guidance and expertise on these types of questions. Need to be mindful procuring our support partner and ensure we get the right fit.
- No hard copies of meeting papers are required in the future and as an organisation we need to keep a check on our own practices.
- Part of the benefit of this is we can learn from the pilot and enable the change, which allows us to explore in more detail in relation to the portfolio review and is a great learning opportunity.
- It is good we are working across the UK regarding this and taking the learning from Wales. There is huge potential to make a real change.

7.6 *Committee were very supportive and agreed to points i), ii) and iii) as above.*

8. Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

8.1 Committee noted the papers for:

Briefings on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender, Queer + (LGBTQ+) People; Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Communities and the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Guidance.

8.2 Norrie updated committee:

- Commitment to update committee on our EDI work at business meetings.
- The LGBTQ+ and BAME papers started life in May & June through interviews with grant holders and stakeholders, to check in with them on the consequences of COVID and we used a framework of questions developed across the Fund.
- We also explored research coming out of the media on the impact of COVID on people and communities and that existing inequalities were now more pronounced.
- As part of our portfolio review, we have had internal conversations and two discussions to date on LGBTQ+ and BAME.
- We reviewed our funding and looked at who we are funding/not funding and started discussing these findings. We are also looking at both the immediate and longer-term future and what it is we need to do.
- We are speaking to and making connections externally and also considering how we can increase awareness of our funding.
- We are monitoring closely what we are funding, when we turn projects down and why.
- The EDI guidance document was developed in England and we have adapted it for Northern Ireland.
- EDI pilot staff training will be delivered in Northern Ireland from November.
- We need to be talking about EDI every day and how we need to change.

8.3 Committee commented:

- Great to see previous discussions with committee translate into these papers.
- There is a great sense of movement and progress in the Fund UK-wide.
- The time is right for us to be looking at this through the portfolio review.
- We need to find the groups that work behind the scenes that are not the usual larger organisations and get our funding to those that need it most.
- Shocked to see the impact of COVID on particularly the LGBTQ+ sector, both for individuals and support services.

- This is a concern especially in Northern Ireland. We have increasing anxiety and a mental health tsunami is on its way regarding depression, suicide attempts and self-harm in the hidden communities.
 - What we decide to do with this intelligence will be vitally important.
 - This is a very time-consuming exercise and we really appreciate the effort to carry out this type of work and research. It is vital in making application routes more accessible.
 - Committee are keen to help, and staff should call on members when required.
- 8.4 Next Steps - Norrie confirmed a paper was being produced on the women's sector and researching disability for the December business meeting. We are also looking at older people, children and young people. Kate commented that Norrie's team are sharing their work with the local funding teams to feed into their plans to help consider the cold spots for outreach and communications were promoting this work through the appropriate networks.
9. **Communications Report - July to September 2020**
- 9.1 Committee noted the report and the Chair commented on the great work achieved, especially the BBC NI coverage.
- 9.2 Amanda updated committee:
- Regarding the BBC NI coverage, we have been able to develop relationships with key journalists.
 - Really strong stories and case studies that can be filmed have helped us to get the messages out.
 - We have also done a lot of work around grant announcements, but because of COVID we have had to suspend our grant holder media training and comms staff have been holding 1-2-1s with grant holders
 - A lot of work has been actioned regarding our brand and thanking Lottery players.
 - Virtual outreach has come to the fore and we have been working with colleagues to analyse the results and using customer insight on how we communicate with customers and stakeholders. A report will be presented at the December business meeting.
- 9.3 Committee commented:
- A very positive report showing the impact of the National Lottery to empower communities and help people in need. Phenomenal work to get these messages across.
 - Members asked about the time it was taking staff to deliver the 1-2-1 media training but were reassured there was a target as part of their strategy to deliver this type of work through brand support. It was also paying dividends through the media coverage, but we will be reviewing and considering virtual communications training.
- 9.4 Dawn also commented that communications and engagement across the UK was working well at the moment and the new Director of Engagement and Insight Faiza Khan should talk to committee about future plans. Most of our comms work is country focussed and there is a sub-group of the Board and an executive team that meet to develop narratives around our grant making in a UK context. We are also carrying out an internal brand audit to ensure we have processes in place to support our grant holders to acknowledge the National Lottery, although Northern Ireland is already very much on top of this.
- 9.5 Funders Forum for NI - Amanda updated committee on the work taking place on repurposing the priorities of this group of independent and semi-independent funders operating in NI. It was an exciting time with potential for collaboration and engaging with government on what we have learnt as funders during the COVID crisis, especially in

relation to leadership. Kate said this was fundamentally important for the Fund, accelerating relationships with government and being more collaborative to give constructive insight. A wider collective view will be really helpful for the sector to articulate its needs and support it to get stories across especially over the next 6-12 months.

10. **Any Other Business**

10.1 Next Meeting

Portfolio Review meeting on Friday 30 October. This will be a three-hour meeting with papers going out in advance to give as much discussion time as possible.

10.2 Charles Mack

Charlie updated committee on changes to his employment and that he would be moving to England to take up a new position with another organisation. He was delighted to confirm that Sandra and Kate had agreed that he will stay on as a NI committee member and this will be reviewed after 6 months.

The meeting finished @ 12:30pm

Signed: _____
Sandra McNamee, Interim Chair

Date: 11 December 2020