



MINUTES OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON FRIDAY 21 FEBRUARY 2025 @ 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</i>
Norman McKinley	<i>NI Committee member</i>
Nick Garbutt	<i>NI Committee member</i>
Kate Beggs	<i>NI Director</i>
Alison Fraser	<i>Senior Head of Funding</i>
Amanda Doherty	<i>Senior Head of Communications & Engagement</i>
Gillian Irvine	<i>Funding Manager - (for items 5 & 6)</i>
Nuala Macauley	<i>Funding Manager - (for items 5 & 6)</i>
Mark Creaney	<i>Funding Manager - (for items 5 & 6)</i>
Jenny FitzGerald	<i>Funding Manager - (for items 5 & 6)</i>
Tracy Johnston	<i>Department for Communities - (for item 10)</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 attendees.

Updates were reported as follows:

- The next Board meeting will be held on Tuesday 25 March.
- NI committee member appraisals have all been completed.
- Regarding project visits, ideally these should be more low key and projects should be encouraged to also talk about the challenges they have faced as well as the successes. . Committee to consult with staff on where they would like to visit. (One visit per quarter).

1.2 NI Director Updates Paper

Committee noted the paper, covering the following points:

- NI Chair's term extension.
- UK Chair visit and attending a NIC meeting (date to be confirmed).
- New staff appointments.
- Strategy implementation.
- **Youth Voice and NIC member Caolan McKiernan.** Caolan will attend the 21 March decision meeting to observe as part of his induction. (Cara Cash-Marley will be Caolan's committee buddy and a meeting will be arranged before the decision meeting).
ACTION: Cara Cash-Marley
- A 45-minute online training session for all Committee members about creating inclusive boardrooms, will be circulated to committee as soon as possible. **ACTION: Kate Beggs**

- Staff engagement survey.
- Priorities for the next 3-6 months.

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

2.1 Apologies

Anne-Marie McClure, NI committee member.

2.2 Conflicts of Interest

Kate Clifford had declarable (non-disqualifiable) interests for the following:

- Rural Community Network, of which Kate is Director, is a current recipient of a Sustainable Community Buildings Grant and is also a Dormant Asset funded partner in two ATR awards.

2.3 NIC Terms of Reference

The updated version was noted and agreed. It was also confirmed that the NI committee quorum will remain as three members.

2.4 Previous Minutes

The minutes from the 11 October 2024 business meeting were formally agreed.

2.5 Actions List

The actions list was noted and will be updated.

2.6 NIC Meetings Timetable 2025/26

The timetable was noted and dates agreed. Calendar invites will be sent out as soon as possible.

ACTION J. Maxwell

- 2.6.1 Committee also noted that the May Away Day will be a full day at an external location. The frequency of business meetings will also be reviewed on an ongoing basis relating to business needs.

ACTION: K.Beggs/J. Maxwell

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

3.1 Committee noted the Communications report for Oct 24-Jan 25

The main headlines were as follows:

- Programmes activity
- Digital
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Customer Satisfaction
- 30 years of National Lottery Funding

- 3.2 Committee noted the significant work completed during the quarter and that Northern Ireland's customer satisfaction figures were continuing to exceed expectations - (increased from 88% in 2023 to 91% April-December 2024).

3.3 Funders Forum NI - FM & DFM Briefing

Committee noted the paper and next steps in relation to stakeholder engagement and leadership role the Fund was playing within the Forum.

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 for the final People & Communities and Empowering Young People decision meeting on 21 March.

5. **NI PROGRAMME PORTFOLIO UPDATE - (A. Fraser)**

N. Macauley, M. Creaney, G. Irvine, J. FitzGerald joined the meeting.

- 5.1 This paper provided an update on the following programmes: Awards for All, Sustainable Community Buildings and Strengthening Communities.

Committee was invited to:

- i) note the content of the paper;
- ii) agree to a fourth tranche of Sustainable Community Buildings (Section 3)
- iii) provide a steer on the issues raised under Strengthening Communities (para 4.4)

5.2 ***Gillian briefed committee on Awards for All:***

- There had been an increase in new to us organisations applying to the programme.
- Outreach sessions will be held in March.

5.3 ***Mark briefed committee on Sustainable Community Buildings:***

- 37 applications have been received for the Eastern tranche.
- Committee noted the plan to re-open a Northern Ireland wide/fourth tranche of the programme on 12 March for 6 weeks, using the following criteria:
 - Applicants still need to own their community building or have an unbreakable 6-year lease.
 - The building must be open and well used by communities.
 - The applicant must not be solely focused on sports or be affiliated with a sports governing body.
 - Applicants must not already hold a SCB grant.

5.3.1 **Committee agreed to a fourth tranche of the Sustainable Community Buildings programme to open in March 2025.**

5.4 ***Nuala briefed committee on Strengthening Communities:***

- To date 11 organisations have been invited to apply with 3 applications received .

5.4.1 The main discussion points were as follows:

- **Counselling** - committee agreed to the approach outlined in the paper, and highlighted that a planned exit strategy and clinical expertise and supervision is important.
- **Rurality** -assessment needs to be clear on which aspects of rurality create vulnerability/poverty/disadvantage/discrimination; need to draw out the challenges of the geography in the assessment report - e.g. badly connected transport, lack of services, youth clubs
- **Health Conditions** - need to demonstrate how the health condition has an impact on for example loneliness due to social isolation; consider funding preventative up stream community responses to health conditions
- **Assessment Reports** - be succinct; explain context behind the budget figures ; outline the current baseline and where they want to get to; how will the project close the gap and focus on the difference the project will make.

6. **NI GRANT BUDGET (A. Fraser)**

This paper provided NI Committee with an overview of the 25/26 grant award budgets for National Lottery Awards for All, Sustainable Community Buildings, Strengthening Communities and indicative budgets up to 29/30.

Committee was invited to:

- i) note the content of the paper;
- ii) agree the grant award budgets for 25/26 and note the indicative budgets for future years as outlined in Annex B

6.1 Committee agreed to the programme budgets as outlined in Annex B

7. DORMANT ASSETS FUND: (*Jenny Fitzgerald*)

This paper outlines the next steps for Dormant Assets NI funding and seeks approval for the proposed Phase Three funding programme.

Committee was invited to:

- i) note and discuss the paper.
- ii) agree that we develop and launch a small grants programme (Section 3).
- iii) agree that we increase maximum grant size for strategic grants and amend the application and decision process (Section 4).

7.1 Committee agreed to:

- i) The development and launch of the small grants programme.
- ii) The flexibility to increase the maximum grant size for strategic grants from £500,00 to £1m and increasing the development grants from £50,000 to £100,000 when justified.

7.2 The second interim evaluation of the Phase One Grant Programme from SQW will be circulated to committee.

ACTION: A.Fraser

7.3 The final evaluation is due in June. A face-to-face grant holders event will follow.

8. NI BUSINESS PLAN (*Kate Beggs*)

8.1 Committee noted the paper and draft NI business plan.

8.2 Members were requested to email Kate Beggs with any questions.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS:

9.1 Next Meeting:

- NIC Decision meeting - Friday 21 March (*final P&C and EYP decisions*).

The meeting finished @ 12:40 pm.

10. Committee met with Tracy Johnston, Department for Communities over a working lunch.

Paul Sweeney .

Signed: _____
Paul Sweeney, NI Chair

Date: 11 April 2025