



**MINUTES OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ON FRIDAY 9 FEBRUARY 2024 @ 10:00 am
ENTERPRISE NORTH-WEST, DERRY**

NI Committee	
Paul Sweeney	<i>NI Chair</i>
Kate Clifford	<i>NI Committee member</i>
Nick Garbutt	<i>NI Committee member</i>
Anne-Marie McClure	<i>NI Committee member</i>
Norman McKinley	<i>NI Committee member</i>
Hannah Sankannawar	<i>Boardroom Apprentice - (virtual)</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>
Gillian Irvine	<i>Funding Manager (for Item 9 - virtual)</i>
Jacqui Maxwell	<i>Governance Officer</i>

1. OPENING REMARKS:

1.1 Chair's Welcome & Verbal Updates

The Chair covered the following points:

- The return of the NI Assembly and subsequent correspondence.
- Sustainable Community Buildings programme launch and the work involved.
- UK Board - UK Chair recruitment and the DCMS workshop.
- NI committee members annual appraisals, which have now been completed.

1.1.2 Norman McKinley fed back on his membership of the UK Funding panel and that a 2-day meeting will be held on 26 & 27 February.

1.2 NI Director Report

Committee noted the report, which covered the following:

- Governance
- Appointments
- Strategy Implementation
- Business Planning
- Funding
- Staff Engagement
- Priorities for the next 3-6 months
- Objectives

1.2.1 Young People

Committee discussed the Youth Voice and Boardroom Apprentice schemes and the excellent contributions the young people had made to the work of the committee. Committee agreed that investment was required to properly involve young people and to give the opportunity to join committees rather than attending as observers. It was noted that a UK-wide review was on-going.

1.2.2 Project Visits

Committee fed back on recent project visits and noted that the UK Board and UKSMT will be visiting NI projects in June. It was acknowledged that it is important to know what has gone wrong/what have been the challenges for projects as well as hearing about the successes. Amanda confirmed forthcoming project visits in the North-West and East Belfast.

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

2.1 Apologies

These had been received from Cara Cash-Marley.

2.2 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

2.3 Previous Minutes

The minutes from 1 December 2023 business meeting were formally agreed.

2.4 Actions List

The updated actions list was noted.

2.5 NIC Meetings Timetable 2023/24

Committee noted the updated timetable and that Norman McKinley was now available for the 1 March decision meeting.

2.5.1 Kate Beggs confirmed that the Fund's Chief Executive, David Knott will be attending the 19 April business meeting.

2.5.2 Away Day

- It was noted that Norman McKinley and Hannah Sankannawar were not available for the May Away Day dates.
- A hybrid format was agreed, i.e. holding the meeting (Thu pm & Fri am) at a suitable community owned venue and an overnight stay in a nearby hotel. This will give time for more discussion and reflection on the future portfolio.
- Timings, location and venues will be suggested and confirmed as soon as possible.

ACTION: NIC/Officers/J. Maxwell

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

3.1 Committee noted the report for December & January. The main headlines were as follows:

- Sustainable Community Buildings launch
- Media
- Digital
- Stakeholder Engagement

- 3.2 Committee commented on the excellent videos being produced to help attract engagement and captivate audiences. A suggestion was also made around using past and present Board/Committee members stories as part of the Lottery 30th birthday celebrations.
- 3.3 Amanda confirmed that the Fund was reviewing its options as part of UK-wide content and channels strategy work.
- 3.4 Committee also noted Northern Ireland's above target customer satisfaction rating.
4. **PORTFOLIO UPDATES - (A. Fraser)**
- 4.1 **Portfolio Data:**
Committee noted the figures for Awards for All; People and Communities and Empowering Young People.
- 4.1.1 Committee suggested further developing the Awards for All data, as this was a very important and interesting area of funding with regard to programme reach and impact.
- 4.2 **Pipeline & Decision Meetings:**
Committee noted application numbers going to each of the March decision meetings and the budgets versus demand. It was reported that a small number of projects will drop out before the meetings and that the success rate will be fairly consistent across the financial year.
- 4.3 **Sustainable Community Buildings - Verbal Update - (A. Fraser)**
- Programme opened on 7 February for applications to the Southern area.
 - 3 applications received to date.
 - Virtual outreach meetings were in progress with positive engagement from the sector.
 - Business in the Community will deliver the carbon literacy training and Action Renewables will be supporting applicants during the environmental plans process.
 - Committee noted that the carbon literacy training does not guarantee funding.
5. **GRANT BUDGET FOR FINANCIAL YEARS 24/25 - 28/29 - (A. Fraser)**
- 5.1 **Committee noted the paper**, which gave an overview of the 24/25 grant award budgets for National Lottery Awards for All, Sustainable Community Buildings, PAC/EYP, our new standard programme and indicative budgets up to 28/29 (forecasted on a five-year basis).
- 5.2 **Committee was invited to:**
- i) agree the grant budgets for 2024/25 for NLA4A and standard (*paras 3.4 and 4.1*)
 - ii) note the indicative budgets for future years (*Annex A*)
- 5.3 **After discussion committee agreed:**
- i) to increase the National Lottery Awards for All NI budget for 2024/25 to £7m per year, using some of the unallocated funds. This amount will be kept under review going forward.
 - ii) the new standard programme budget of £20m per year.
 - iii) the indicative awards allocation as set out in Annex A.

6. PORTFOLIO REVIEW UPDATE - (A. Fraser & A. Doherty)

- 6.1 **Committee noted the paper**, which was a follow up from the discussion on the portfolio review paper at the NI Committee meeting on 1st December 2023. It covers mitigation of risk in relation to the proposal to close EYP and PAC and makes a recommendation on the upper grant limit.
- 6.2 **Committee was invited to:**
- i) review the risks and proposed mitigation to programme closure and agree to a period of programme closure of five months (*Section 4 and 5*)
 - ii) decide on the upper grant limit (*Section 6*)
- 6.3 Committee noted the mitigations to help manage the closure - (effective management of the pipeline; money still flowing to communities through other programmes P&C, EYP, SCB, and AfA; Autumn new programme launch timeline taking into consideration a possible general election; strong Funding Officer relationships with organisations, local communities and stake holders; a grant variation process is available if required and that there will be robust messaging both internally and externally around timescales).
- 6.4 Kate Beggs reported that in relation to our future funding offer, there is still a lot of development work to complete with both the team and NI committee. We are refining our messaging on how the new programme will look with an emphasis on impact and tackling inequalities and focussing on the community missions around health and children and young people.
- 6.5 Kate also reported back on the rationale for proposing that the upper grant limit should remain at £500,000, but that we will keep a watching brief on future developments relating to other funding streams coming to an end - e.g. Peace Funding.
- 6.6 **After discussion committee agreed:**
- i) to support the paper and the programme closure gap from April to September 2024.
 - ii) the upper grant limit for the new programme to remain at £500,000 with a two-year review.
- 6.7 **Open Discussion on Themes**

The main discussion points were as follows:

- In relation to the needs of the elderly, there will be support from Awards for All up to £20,000.
- Theory of Change will guide our discussions in April and May.
- Clarity is required on knowing what exactly we are going to prioritise and how we consider the boundaries upfront, define as best as possible on the need and focus on our missions.
- We will use the next couple of months to engage with policy officials to get an understanding of the Departments' strategic intent. We will bring our findings back to committee for further discussion. **ACTION: NISMT**
- We need sector leaders to give us their view point on health and wellbeing and children and young people. This will help us to move upstream in our thinking and look at what interventions are required, to consider what is the best way to spend money across Northern Ireland.
- Five-year funding could result in long term interventions.
- Poverty is a prevailing theme at a time when fiscal pressures are curtailing public services.

- How do we frame the role of the VCS in supporting some of the health gains, where does this sit in our thinking?
- A transformational ambition in one system could create opportunities to fund the VCS within the health sector.
- Where does additionality fit in and where do we sit?
- Can we consider livelihood projects in relation to, for example, the connection of poor nutrition, poverty and health outcomes?
- We are not starting from a scratch; we have experience with beneficiaries being at the centre of our funding using partnerships and collaborations.
- Preventative intervention is the right way to proceed but needs investment.

6.8 The Chair confirmed that the staff team will now take the above to the next stage, but that committee members will be available for discussion when required. **ACTION: NISMT**

7. DORMANT ACCOUNTS - LESSONS LEARNED - (A. Fraser)

7.1 *Committee noted the paper*, which outlined the lessons learned from Phase One of the Dormant Accounts Fund NI, based on discussions with all colleagues who were involved in the programme from Funding, Business Support, Communications and Knowledge & Learning teams.

7.2 *Committee was invited to:*

i) discuss the impacts and suggestions outlined in the paper.

7.3 Committee noted the paper and subjects outlined in Annex A. It was recognised that the paper went back to the very beginning of the Dormant Accounts process, considered the strategic element and was to be used purely for internal reflection.

8. ACCESS TO RESILIENCE

DORMANT ASSETS NI - PHASE TWO GRANT PROGRAMME - (A. Fraser)

8.1 *Committee noted the paper*, which outlined the Access to Resilience grant programme, which will increase access to capacity building support for small grassroots VCSE organisations in NI.

8.2 *Committee was invited to:*

i) agree the update provided in Annex A.

8.3 Alison Fraser reported that some customer testing had been undertaken, which resulted in certain wording needing to be reviewed to help with understanding. A video will also be available on the website to explain eligibility and there will be face-to-face sessions that people should try to attend before applying.

8.4 *After discussion, committee agreed the actions as outlined in Annex A:*

- Branding
- Incentive payments
- Toolkits
- Maximum grant size £150,00 for up to 3 years
- Consultants' website text
- Launch events and briefings
- Budget of £3m with an option to increase to £5m, committed by November 2024.

9. NATIONAL CHILDREN'S BUREAU

DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT CONTRACT FOR EYP PROGRAMME (A. Fraser/G. Irvine)

- 9.1 **Committee noted the paper, which confirmed that (NCB)** was awarded £604,721 to deliver a Development and Support Contract for projects supported under Empowering Young People (EYP) Programme. The Contract started on 14 September 2016 and is due to end on 13 September 2024 with an option to extend for a further 3 years.
- 9.2 **Committee was invited to:**
- i) to consider the options outlined (para 3.4)
 - ii) to decide on the future of the contract (para 3.5)
- 9.3 **After consideration, committee agreed 3.4.4 - Option 4 of the paper, to end the current National Children's Bureau contract.**
- 9.4 The above means that 225K will remain in the grant budget for the next 3 years and EYP grant holders can avail of support provided via the Fund's 'more than a funder' role.
10. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS:**
- 10.1 Next Meetings
PAC and EYP Decision Meetings - Fri 1st & 15th March.
11. **BRINGING THE OUTSIDE IN:**
- 11.1 Brian O'Neill, Director of Development and Enterprise at Enterprise North West, (a leading enterprise agency that specialises in business support, economic development and social enterprise development in the North West of Ireland), joined the meeting and introductions were made.
- 11.2 Brian presented to committee on the NW Community Wealth Building Partnership; partnership members; proposed capital projects of members and work achievements to date.
- 11.3 The Chair thanked Brian for his time and interesting presentation.

The meeting finished @ 2:10pm

Paul Sweeney .

Signed: _____
Paul Sweeney, NI Chair

Date: 19 April 2024