



**NCI Annual General Meeting
29th of April 2025, 5PM**

Venue: Online via Zoom

Attendance: (17)

NCI Members:

Jimmy O'Keefe

Noreen Byrne

Ashling Cronin

NCI Steering Committee:

Charlie Coakley

Mark Kearney

Malachy Campbell

Hannah O'Kelly

Eliot Taylor

Public attendance for later portion of the event:

Andrew Keane

Donald McDonagh

NCI Secretariat: Deirdre Lane, NCI Executive Coordinator (DL)

Chair: Alan Costello (AC)

Board Member Jonathan Cooper (JC)

Board Member Holly Pettingdale (HP)

Board Member Martina von Richter (MvR)

Board Member Darragh Gaffney (DG)

Finance Officer Caitriona Lynch (CL)

Apologies: Sandra Velthuis, Martha O'Hagan Luff, Catherine Farrell, Maria Fitzpatrick, Fiona Smith (FS)

Agenda

1. Welcome
2. AGM Business (AC)
 - a. To receive & consider the company's financial statements (Finance Officer Caitriona Lynch)
 - b. Authorisation for Board to appoint Auditors and to fix their remuneration (AC)
 - c. Election of the Board of Directors, Welcome new director (AC/ Board)
3. Review company affairs (AC)
4. Project Update - Secretariat
5. AOB

1. Welcome from the Chair –

NCI Director Alan Costello (AC) welcomed members to the Annual General Meeting.

AGM Business:

Conflict of interest - AC raised the opportunity for any conflicts of interest to be declared - none were raised.

Review of Minutes - The previous minutes of 6 June 2024 AGM were accepted with no queries raised. Proposed by MvR, seconded by AC

2. a. Presentation of Financial Statements for 2024 -

NCI Finance Officer Caitriona Lynch (CL) presented the audited financial statements for the year up to December 2024, noting a decrease in turnover income due to project completions including:

- National Biodiversity Action Plan
- INCASE project
- Business For Biodiversity Ireland which spun off as an entity, creating a CLG with a Board and organisation now separate to BFBI.

NCI grant income remained stable, resulting in a net profit of €8,000 for the year, down from €16,000 the previous year. Contractors are to include VAT costs going forward, as she outlined the impact of non-reclaimable VAT on expenses and other costs of including IT, conference and workshop costs, auditor fees, which had increased, and a consultant payment for a project tender service and other professional services.

There were no queries about the accounts for CL. AC commented that NCI overheads are relatively low, with project income flexes in line with our contractor hours. He said he and the NCI Board are available to members for questions and the financial documents will be made available on the Company Register Office to members to examine. FS had raised that NCI will pay contractors day rate plus vat costs to NCI.

AC passed on the gratitude from the Board to CL for her work.

b. Authorisation for Board to appoint Auditors and to fix their remuneration -

AC proposed the reappointment of the auditors, Whiteside Cullinane, for another year which was seconded by JC.

c. Election of the Board of Directors, Welcome new director -

AC proposed the re-election of directors (mentioning that JC had been co-opted to the Board and previous Chair Fiona Ross had stepped down due to overlapping work commitments.)

DL joined NCI as Executive Coordinator in 2024, with CL as Finance Officer and FS as Communication Executive, making up the current NCI secretariat on a contract basis. AC issued thanks on behalf of the Board to Iseult Sheehy who stepped down as former Executive Director and former contractor Emer Ní Dhúill who both since moved on to work with Business For Biodiversity Ireland.

The NCI Steering Committee had been elected in December to serve from 2025 to 2027 with Jimmy O’Keeffe and Ashling Cronin chairing again. AC thanked to all the Steering Committee for their ongoing support and voluntary contributions to NCI.

Re-election of NCI Board of Directors -

MVR, DG & AC not due for renewal at this AGM.

JC’s co-option as director in Q1 of 2024 was reaffirmed.

JC briefly introduced himself, having moved from Managing Director for an environmental consultancy, in 2022, to charitable and not-for-profit work, bringing board and financial management and governance experience of small NGOs to NCI.

JC proposed Holly Pettingale as Director and MVR seconded.

HP outlined her background in food and forestry, decarbonisation with sustainability advisory and communications experience as senior director with FTI Consultants, aiming to integrate biodiversity to boardroom decisions.

AC welcomed JC and HP to the NCI Board of Directors.

3. Review company affairs (AC)

AC discussed the ongoing development of the board, including plans to co-opt members from the steering group to increase board membership from five to seven. He clarified terms for board members, suggesting a maximum service of ten years, potentially reduced to six years. He acknowledged the significant work accomplished by the organization despite limited resources and emphasized the need for a strategic review

Project update (Secretariat DL) -

The meeting transitioned to a public session, and DL was introduced to present key NCI activities for the upcoming year.

AC highlighted the role of communications in promoting natural capital insights and encouraged all members to engage with the platforms.

AC stressed the importance of collaboration and knowledge sharing among members to build a strong repository of information.

AC emphasised the importance of policy development and communication strategies to promote natural capital thinking in Ireland, highlighting the need for collaboration among members and highlighted the importance of strategic review and the period of renewal it ushered in as NCI enters its second decade as an organisation.

AC thanked NCI core funders Department of Agriculture Food & the Marine, and the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage, NPWS for providing the primary funding for NCI's work.

He wished Business For Biodiversity Ireland well and looked forward to ongoing conversations with their board.

AC mentioned some upcoming events for 2025:

Biodiversity Day talk on May 22 with Dr Maria Fitzpatrick, NCI Steering Committee for Kildare Biodiversity Week

NCI panel at the Mary Robinson Courage in Crisis Conference in Co Mayo.

Establishment of a Natural Capital Expert group

JC raised the requirement and influence of the Steering Group in the identifying of superior NC expertise. Could this lead to NCI microcredentials e.g. in the Water space national budget is available for training courses for CARO and other public bodies. What NC insights can be tailored from existing offerings and suitable formats for target audience?

Natural Capital Repository: NCI is working on developing a publicly available database repository of individuals involved in the natural capital space.

Diversity in Agriculture: NCI is collaborating with the Department of Agriculture/ NPWS and reaching out to organisations such as FLIARA, to identify and promote the need for Research into gender equality relating to natural resource governance. NCI aims to collate data on all the people active in natural capital and related activities in Ireland which is publicly available in the sector, and aims to explore and promote diversity in the nature and farming sectors, with NPWS.

Encourage councils and educators to connect, convene and further Natural Capital education, to create impact and drive change.

Bax marine project: NCI tendered with a consortium on a large project, which will look at Natural Capital in marine ecosystems.

Nature Restoration Plan: NCI is also instrumental in stakeholder outreach for upcoming forums on the Nature Restoration Plan with the Department of the Environment.

DL said NCI would welcome support and expertise from the Steering Committee on all projects and initiatives and thanked those who were representing us on committees, including the Bioeconomy Stakeholders Forum, Agri-Knowledge & Innovation Share and Peatland Finance Initiative.

Director Martina Von Richter attending the UN CoP for Biodiversity in Nice and aims to achieve the help of all stakeholders, including supporting the government and find pathways to diversity and greater impact.

AC added that governance will be reviewed in the next two to three months with more work throughout the summer on governance review and changes within NCI.

DL raising the interview and candidate selection to replace EniD was ongoing. JC volunteered to assist in the interviewing process.

AC congratulated all on the work to date.

AOB

AC to reach out to Susan Rossney

The Conflict of Interest policy to include a registration template for the Board, Steering Committee and contractors for voluntary self reporting and invite voluntary submissions.

Coordinator reports to be on a monthly basis and plan ahead for the board consideration .

Comments welcome , admin and oversight

JC actions from the governance review , summer 2025 renew and updates

MVR mention the board want to work closer with SC

AC will mention the same and strategy due for renewal, with new governance structures ,

MvR made reference to the DECC NC Expert group and the Mary Robinson Panel as avenues to drive the building of the ecosystem services with the purpose of NC in Ireland for farmer payments and ways on how to value and pay to restore nature.

JC suggested an ethics committee to flesh out what are we as NCI .

AC AGM agenda agreed with the board and thanked all for attending .