



Minutes of NCI AGM 2023

Wednesday 26th April 2023, 5pm

Venue: Zoom

Present: 19 in attendance, including:

NCI Board: Fiona Ross, Chair (FR), Alan Costello (AC), Darragh Gaffney (DG), Kate Hotten (KH)

Company Secretary: Pat Costello (PC)

Financial Officer: Chloe Lipscombe (CL)

Secretariat: Fiona Smith (FS), Iseult Sheehy (IS)

NCI Contractors: Emer Ni Dhuill (EnD), Sarah Zimmermann (SZ)

Consultant: Sandra Velthuis, Whitebarn Consulting (SV)

NCI Steering Committee: Jimmy O’Keeffe (SC Chair - JK), Ashling Cronin (SC VC - ACn), Jane Stout (JS) & more

1. Introduction

Chair of the Board Fiona Ross welcomed attendees and introduced the meeting agenda, the NCI team & Board members. She thanked outgoing Company Secretary Pat Costello, finishing up in his role that day, for his service and engagement.

FR also thanked incumbent Finance Officer Chloe Lipscombe for her work since she is stepping down from her role in the coming days, and welcomed incoming Finance Officer Catriona Lynch.

FR also noted the presence on the call of several Steering Committee members including NCI Steering Committee Chair Jimmy O’Keeffe and commended their engagement with consultant Sandra Velthuis for the NCI Strategic Review.

2. AGM Business

FR introduced a number of points of AGM business and explained the formal process that required someone to propose and second each point, and noted that voting would be counted through a show of hands.

- To receive & consider the company’s financial statements

CL displayed a slide showing NCI accounts for 2022 and explained these are also accessible at the back of the Annual Report & among documents sent out to all via email ahead of AGM. She briefly ran through NCI’s incomings and outgoings for our project work, contractors fees, tax

affairs etc and said overall NCI net assets had increased by 33 per cent in 2022. CL said anyone with any further queries on NCI finances is welcome to email her directly.

The financial statements were proposed and seconded by AC & DG and supported with a show of hands.

- **Authorisation for Board to appoint Auditors and to fix their remuneration**

CL & FR noted the good work of our auditors Whiteside Cullinane and said they were willing to continue in their work for us. The auditors' continued engagement was proposed & seconded by DG & AC. The auditors' remuneration was agreed to be of a similar cost as previously. The point was proposed and seconded by IS & EnD.

- **Re-election of the Board of Directors**

Three directors offered to stand for re-election, Fiona Ross, Darragh Gaffney and Alan Costello. FR proposed AC, IS seconded, he was voted in by show of hands.

FR proposed DG for re-election, seconded by JK, voted in by show of hands

AC proposed FR for re-election, DG seconded, voted in by show of hands.

- **Item of special business**

FR noted NCI faced a challenge in relation to how members are defined, and in 2022 were advised by lawyers to regularise the definition of members v membership. Those who had signed up to the NCI newsletter, in the region of 1,200 individuals, had previously been termed 'member'. An explanation of this change was sent to all with their AGM notifications - any of these 1,200+ subscribers are welcome to send their basic info (name & address) to be added to an official members' register and become part of the decision-making forum for the organisation. There may be further strategic changes after the strategic review.

AC proposed the change, DG seconded, it was voted in by show of hands.

- **Review the company's affairs**

FR gave a brief overview of how NCI has worked successfully in 2022 following the Strategy document to 2023 - this will be updated for the future following a consultant's review.

In 2022, in accordance with our strategic targets:

- NCI secured funding
- Maintained good media engagement
- Achieved good social media outreach
- Executed excellent work on policy submissions from Paddy Woodworth & the team in our Policy Working Group.

FR paid tribute to former NCI Chair of the Board Jane Stout for her past & ongoing work advocating for natural capital and biodiversity.

FR thanked all involved in our strategic work in 2022 and said she looks forward to working with SV on the Strategic Plan.

3. Project Update

Executive Coordinator Iseult Sheehy presented an overview of key projects in the Annual Report.

- INCASE - IS congratulated the project team which has submitted its final report to funders, the EPA, after four years of work and will soon begin dissemination of findings once that report is published.
- ForES - a 4-year multi-disciplinary project following on from INCASE natural capital work, with scientists at Trinity College Dublin & University College Dublin working with Coillte estates developing a tool for decisions on forestry ecosystem services. JS pointed out that NCI is not a partner but contracted to facilitate communications for the project.
- National Biodiversity Conference - facilitated by NCI, this event led by former NCI Steering Committee Chair Conor Kretsch was a huge piece of work for the NCI contractor team. A final report on the successful sold-out conference was submitted to NPWS in January.
- National Biodiversity Action Plan - NCI is part of the consortium drafting the 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan, along with KPMG for Ireland, the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage (DHLGH). Our role wraps this week and the draft to date will be passed on to NPWS to be finalised. (Due to the necessity to bring in content from the public consultation the end point of the Plan had stretched.) IS thanked Conor Kretsch and Sarah Zimmerman for their work on the plan.
- Business For Biodiversity Ireland – the DHLGH & Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine-backed platform is halfway through its 3-year development. AC is guiding this work along with Jane Stout, and the platform is going from strength to strength with an exciting year ahead.

4. Strategic Review

FR introduced Sandra Velthuis of Whitebarn Consulting who outlined the process of undertaking a Strategic Review of the organisation to help decide on the future operations – in addition to NCI liaison and administration, SV is conducting:

- a desk study key internal and external documents,
- one-on-one discussions with Steering Committee, Board, stakeholders and contractor team
- has issued a survey on strategy to all on the NCI mailing list to gather views
- has an in-person strategy workshop scheduled for May for NCI key team & committee.

Once strategising and decision-making is complete in collaboration with the team, SV will formulate a plan for NCI. She outlined some prospective questions to be considered, relating to terminology,

stakeholder targeting, NCI's strengths & weaknesses, organisational gaps, potential partners & funding streams.

FR thanked Sandra and urged interested parties to fill in the survey or get in touch directly with Sandra or herself with thoughts on the future direction of NCI.

5. AOB

FR paid tribute to outgoing Board member Kate Hotten for all her extra unpaid work for the organisation over the past year. IS seconded this. FR also noted thanks for outgoing Steering Committee/ Policy Working Group member Paddy Woodworth.

FR reminded everyone to submit their details if they wish to become official NCI members with a decision-making function and finished by thanking all in attendance for their time and attention. FR brought the AGM to a close.