



Minutes of NCI AGM 2022

Wednesday 23rd March 2022 5pm – 6pm

Venue: Zoom

Board members: Jane Stout (JS), Alan Costello (AC), Pat Costello (PC), Emer Moriarty Crowley (EMC), Kate Hotten (KH)

Financial Officer: Chloe Lipscombe

Secretariat: Fiona Smith, Iseult Sheehy

In attendance: 26 members

1. Welcome & apologies

JS welcomed attendees, gave apologies from NCI Steering Committee members Mary Kelly-Quinn, Dorothy Maxwell & Tom Popple.

2. Approval of minutes from AGM 2021

JS noted that NCI had not received any comments on the minutes of last year's AGM. JS proposed the minutes, PC seconded them. Proposal was approved by members with a show of hands and minutes were accepted as an accurate reflection of the AGM from last year.

3. Annual report

JS presented the annual report via slideshow.

Increased funding was provided by National Parks & Wildlife Service/Dept of Housing, Local Government & Heritage & DAFM

JS provided an overview of governance - previous Executive Coordinator Orlaith Delargy has moved to an associate director position with Sustainable Futures team at KPMG in 2021, and was replaced by Iseult Sheehy

Reflecting an increase in demand for project work, NCI increased our contractor base – Drs Emer Ní Dhuill, Noreen Brennan, Sarah Zimmerman.

JS noted NCI had won several project tenders over the past year and is seen as a trustworthy organisation in the field, with NCI membership rising to over 1,000. JS noted that natural capital concepts have seen growing awareness among the general public and are increasingly being put into policy and into practice across sectors.

An overview of NCI's Policy and project work was provided (further details in 2021 [Annual Report](#)).

JS commented particularly on the success of the Policy Working Group, led by contractor Emer Ni Dhuill to input into policy consultations with several recent submissions made on the relevance of natural capital to policy consultations in 2022.

An overview of NCI's activities was provided including:

- [Data for Nature](#) workshop & report in May 2021
- [Peatlands Gathering](#) event in October 2021 (key messages presented at COP26)
- CARO workshop series on [Nature-based Solutions](#)
- Peatland Finance Initiative (first phase report due soon)
- Supporting the National Biodiversity Forum to produce the next draft of the National Biodiversity Action Plan public consultation
- The Business and Biodiversity Platform, [Business For Biodiversity](#)
- [INCASE](#) research project
- [For-ES](#) project beginning in 2022 with NCI due to come aboard as communications partner

JS proposed the Annual Report, it was seconded by Alan Costello and accepted by a show of hands.

4. Audit report & financial statements

Financial Officer Chloe Lipscombe presented the accounts from the auditors. Revenue has increased year on year, mainly because income from the increased volume of project work, with a concurrent increase in contractor costs. Tax bill was covered by margin on project work, any excess will go back into helping us achieve our goals for 2022.

JS asked for approval of audit report & financial statements. This was seconded by AC. These were accepted with a show of hands.

JS thanked CL for her work on the accounts over the year. PC seconded the thanks and noted CL is kindly volunteering her time and expertise.

5. Appointment of Directors

PC explained that according to NCI's constitution, one third of Directors have to step down at each AGM. JS is stepping down from her role but has agreed to be re-elected and continue in her role as chair until a new chair has been appointed, and will then continue on in an *ex-officio* role. PC is stepping down but willing to continue as Company Secretary for another year to ease the transition. The directors stepped down and put themselves forward for re-election at this AGM, which was seconded by AC. Proposal was approved by members.

AC proposed Darragh Gaffney as a new director, KH seconded, proposal was accepted. DG accepted the role and said a few words of thanks.

6. Authorisation for Board to appoint Auditors and to fix their remuneration

PC sought approval from the members to re-appoint Whiteside Cullinane as auditors for NCI. NCI has been happy with their work to date. AC seconded. Proposal was approved by members.

7. NCI Strategy 2022-2024 and Work Plan 2022

Executive Coordinator Iseult Sheehy presented an update on the NCI Strategic Plan to the membership.

IS announced that, along with the Business & Biodiversity Platform and the National Biodiversity Action Plan draft consultation, NCI have won a third major public tender contract in the biodiversity field, to organise The National Biodiversity Conference in June 2022, supporting stakeholder engagement in the NBAP.

In addition, NCI has won a COFORD-funded project on ecosystem services led by contractor Noreen Brennan, which related to forestry being extended in other sectoral policies.

On Fundraising, a funding group met to assess the viability of putting together a Leadership Circle for Corporate Funding, this plan has been put on hold amid concerns on its currently viability but will be revisited in 2022 in order to move towards the fundraising target of 150k per annum.

On NCI achieving Charitable Status, the board is working with Beauchamps to ensure we are charitable-status ready in order to start the process in Q2.

On Engagement & Outreach, NCI is reaching many more people through our increased project work, our growing membership & social media numbers, our newly-formalised Policy Working Group and will work on our Media Response Unit in Q2. We have developed a new social media strategy to streamline our messaging across our various projects. We are developing course materials for natural capital at university level and there is a call for similar for corporate training. NCI has an increasing number of requests for speakers on natural capital and hopes to continue to expand our contractor base where possible to meet the demand.

On Research, the INCASE project is wrapping up, but our new Forestry projects will be up and running and we have been consulting our members and Steering Committee via surveys and will formalise a research plan.

8. AOB

Darragh Gaffney queried if NCI qualifies for 'R&D' tax credits - CL will look into this with DGs help.

PW thanked the team and praised how the organisation has grown and JS for shepherding the process over the years.

JS thanked PW for his work on the Steering Committee.

An open discussion with membership was held.

A member asked about ways for NCI to mobilise the members to get involved in NCI's work. IS responded that last year we sent out a call-out to members to ask for help to put out policy submissions, we are planning to expand our deliverables with more webinars to explain how the natural capital approach is developing. With the Business & Biodiversity Platform, we will add specialists to our advisory board where needed, and will send out a call-out to members periodically to see what the expertise, interest and availability is. Members were also asked to please email NCI directly with suggestions and offers of help. KH asked if Communication Executive FS could encourage members to add to our web and social media offerings such as our events calendar. FS recommended members check our events calendar on our site and send us events to add via email, also to feel free to offer guest blogs, interview members for podcasts and other outlets and we will issue further feedback surveys.

KH highlighted how many of our projects are biodiversity-related and asked the board to explain how that fits into the natural capital approach as a whole. JS explained that biodiversity, while not the only aspect of natural capital, has a big part to play within the system. NCI SC chair CK noted that in terms of international policy drivers on nature conservation there is a strong biodiversity focus, tying it in issues of natural capital, stocks, flows, justice and public goods. This links very strongly to the Business For Biodiversity Platform, how natural assets are essential to business, part of conversation around the National Biodiversity Action Plan & Biodiversity Conference is around how if we do not preserve biodiversity we are losing core elements our society, and our economy needs to be sustainable into the future. This ensures natural capital isn't forgotten in these conversations and leverages interest in it. IS echoed this, saying biodiversity is a useful gateway into speaking about natural capital.

Catherine Farrell commented on how in her work, she found even the term biodiversity can be confusing to community members on projects so a layperson's guide and glossary will be useful. FS – we hope to update our current glossary to make terms more accessible soon. IS noted we held a feedback workshop with students on our website to get a user-experience assessment, which will be helpful to inform redesign with language and messaging in mind.

One member from an eNGO thanked us for our work. JS asked her about her response to natural capital language – she responded that while the terms can give the impression of being 'capitalist' initially that's why NCI's work is so key, to get the message across to everyone that it is about conservation.

JS brought the AGM to a close.