

**131st MEETING OF THE FOYLE CARLINGFORD AND IRISH
LIGHTS COMMISSION**

Thursday 1st September 2022 at 9.30am

Via Teleconference

Attendees

Present

Heather Mackey (Chair)
Conor Corr
Danny Kennedy
Declan Little
Fiona Walsh
Frances Lucy
Jack Keyes
Laurence Arbuckle
Niall Greene

In Attendance - Loughs Agency

Sharon McMahon – Designated Officer
Laura McCready (Minutes)

Non Attendance

Terry McWilliams

Private Time for Board Members

The Board did not avail of private time before the Board Meeting commenced.

RESERVED

Emergency Board Meeting

Chair thanked the Board Members who recently attended an emergency Board Meeting and those Members whose actions following the meeting were instrumental in moving the budget issue forward.

Foyle Maritime Festival

Chair thanked the staff of the Agency and Gray's Communications for their recent work at the Foyle Maritime Festival. She added that the festival was a wonderful event and advised that it was a great

opportunity to meet with the staff on the ground who are great ambassadors for the Agency. Chair thanked the Board Members who attended the reception prior to the event which was most enjoyable.

1. Apologies

None

2. Conflict of Interest

There were no conflicts of interest with any agenda items.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as an accurate record.

Proposed Niall Greene

Seconded Conor Corr

3.1 Reserved Minutes

The reserved minutes of the previous meeting were agreed by all.

Proposed Frances Lucy

Seconded Laurence Arbuckle

3.2 Matters Arising

Designated Officer advised that since it has been quite some time since the previous Board Meeting, many of the action items have moved on considerably. She added that the budget issue was addressed at the Emergency Board Meeting and therefore this negated the need for a further letter to be issued to the NSMC.

4. CEO Progress Report

Prior to the Board Meeting Board Members were provided with a comprehensive overview of current significant issues, strategic updates and governance and accountability updates from the Designated Officer.

2022 Budget

Designated Officer thanked the Board Members for their assistance in relation to the above. She added that since the Emergency Board Meeting the Agency's budget has been approved. Designated Officer confirmed that she will attend an Accountability / Governance meeting with Sponsor Departments the following day where future budgets will be discussed.

RESERVED

Recruitment

Conor Corr noted the recent recruitment of a Development Officer from the HR report. He advised that the successful candidate brings excellent developmental skills and will be instrumental to attracting future funding to the Agency.

Niall Greene advised that the Board has not been provided with any further information in relation to the CEO recruitment and asked for an update in relation to same. Chair advised that the Board will discuss the recruitment during private time at the end of the Board Meeting.

RESERVED

RESERVED

4.1 Court Case Update

Prior to the Board Meeting Board Members were provided with an update of the Agency's active legal cases.

Laurence Arbuckle advised that in his opinion there is still too much information being presented to Board in this area. He added that Board should only be receiving top level information in relation to court cases.

4.2 RESERVED

RESERVED

4.3 Horizon 2023 – STRAITS Project

Strategic Infrastructure for Improved Animal Tracking in European Seas (STRAITS)

Designated Officer advised that the Agency has been successful in securing funding through the Horizon 2030 Programme for the above project to the value of €3,760,945. She added that based on the success of the SeaMonitor Project and the Agency's affiliation with the European Tracking Network (ETN) an opportunity was taken in April 2022 to submit an application under Pillar 1 – Excellent Science (Research Infrastructure), which was successful. Designated Officer confirmed that, led by Loughs Agency, the project consortium consists of ten institutions from across Europe and Canada.

Designated Officer advised that there will be a 2 day event in the Guildhall in Derry on the 23rd and 24th February 2023 where the SeaMonitor Project will close out and the STRAITS Project will be launched. Designated Officer confirmed that the Agency has also submitted an application for Biodiversa funding for a telemetry project in Foyle and Carlingford. She added that the Agency may also be submitting an application under PEACEPLUS.

Fiona Walsh congratulated the Designated Officer and the Agency on this wonderful news. Niall Greene congratulated the team on their efforts to date. He added that he is sure that it is not only the location of the Agency that has attracted potential partners, but their ability to lead and deliver that has been recognised. He added that Canada has been leading on telemetry for some time and has successfully engaged with civil society in this area which he hopes will also filter through to the STRAITS Project.

Laurence Arbuckle congratulated the Designated Officer and her team on their efforts in obtaining Horizon funding.

Conor Corr also wished to pass on his congratulations to the Designated Officer and her team for securing the above funding.

4.4 The Carlingford Area (Definition of the Mouth of the Clanrye River) Regulations 2016

Prior to the Board Meeting Board Members were provided with a copy of the above Regulation and a background paper.

There were no questions / comments in relation to same.

5. Senior Management Team Updates

Prior to the Board Meeting Board Members were provided with the above for their information.

Chair advised that she found the reports very difficult to read and suggested a change in format. Other Board Members agreed. Chair asked that the reports be amended going forward to include a summary of the Directorates' activities.

5.1 Meenbog Update

Prior to the Board Meeting Board Members were provided with an update paper from the Director of Conservation and Protection in relation to the above.

Niall Greene noted from the report a recommendation for the project to be extended to the end of 2024. He advised that given the ongoing work and significance of the project he would support this proposal.

Designated Officer advised that currently this project is being funded by both Sponsor Departments, however this is one of the projects that she would assign to the Sustainability and Fisheries Improvement unit to take forward.

6. Finance Update

Prior to the Board Meeting Board Members were provided with a Budget Report up to the end of July 2022.

Chair advised that as requested at the previous Board Meeting a cover page was added to the report, however added that this did not seem to help. Chair asked that a clear, concise breakdown be provided going forward.

7. Risk Register Update

Prior to the Board Meeting Board Members were provided with the Corporate Risk Register for information.

Chair asked if there is a risk associated with cyber security. Designated Officer advised that this is covered under CR2, however added that there is also a separate standalone risk in the Corporate Services Operational Risk Register which is more in-depth.

Designated Officer advised that there has recently been a cyber-attack on one of the other North South Bodies. She added that as soon as the Agency was made aware of this attack our IT Department immediately reviewed our protocols and provided her with an update on same.

RESERVED

8. Audit and Risk Committee Update

Prior to the Board Meeting Board Members were provided with a copy of the draft minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) Meeting of 24th May 2022.

Frances Lucy, Chair of the ARC provided Board Members with an overview of the meeting, detailing the main points of discussion. She added that the next meeting is scheduled to take place on 29th September 2022.

RESERVED

9. Communications

Prior to the Board Meeting Board Members were provided with Communications Reports for June and July 2022 as well as the Foyle Maritimes Festival Post Event Report.

Conor Corr advised that he attended the event at Headquarters prior to the Foyle Maritime Festival as well as the festival itself. He added that all Board Members should take the opportunity to visit Headquarters whenever an occasion arises, to meet the staff and view their presentations which were extraordinary at the recent event.

Conor advised that he welcomes the opportunity to take part in an in person Board Meeting in December 2022 where presentations from staff would be welcomed.

RESERVED

10. Equality

Prior to the Board Meeting Board Members were provided with the following documents from their review and approval:

- Draft Equality Action Plan
- Equality Fiver Year Review
- Equality Scheme for Loughs Agency

Chair advised that the documents were very lengthy and suggested that a hyperlink or overview may be more useful in future. Designated Officer advised that equality and the approval of the Agency's Equality Scheme is a matter for the Board, therefore the documents had to be presented in full.

Frances Lucy advised that she is aware that gender balance is a sensitive issue and asked what the Agency does to ensure gender balance during recruitments.

Designated Officer advised that there is a gender / religious balance on each interview panel. She added that the Agency is required by law to complete a Section 75 return annually to the Equality Commission on its actions throughout the year.

Proposed Conor Corr
Seconded Fiona Walsh

11. AOB

Cyber Security

Prior to the Board Meeting Board Members were provided with a podcast on cyber security, an Assurance Statement and an Assurance Deck from DAERA for their information.

Chair welcomed Eamonn McCoy from DAERA Digital Services Division and Paul Harkin, Loughs Agency's IT Manager to the meeting.

Eamonn provided the Board with a presentation on cyber security and explained the importance of the Assurance Statement as a baseline for the Agency.

Chair asked the IT Manager if he was content with the information supplied or had anything further to add. The IT Manager advised that the Agency recently obtained Cyber Essential Plus certification and although the Agency is not ISO certified, we work to ISO standards.

Eamonn confirmed that the Agency is certainly in a good position in terms of cyber security and added that the above certification is a strong indication of good practice.

Fiona Walsh thanked both gentlemen for their presentation and information which was very reassuring.

Chair thanked both gentlemen for attending and for the information provided.

12. Date and Venue of Next Meeting

The next Board Meeting will take place on Thursday 20th October 2022 via teleconference.

Item No	Action	Responsible	Expected Delivery Date
5	SMT reports be amended going forward to include a summary of the Directorates' activities.	Senior Management Team	20.10.2022