**Summary of the NIEA Board Meeting**

**14 December 2022**

Members in Attendance:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Paul Donnelly | Acting Chief Executive, NIEA (Chair) |
| Richard Crowe | Director of Resource Efficiency Division, NIEA |
| Mark Hammond\* | Acting Director of Natural Environment Division, NIEA |
| Paul Douglas | Non-Executive Board Member |

Other Attendees:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Stephen Norrie | NIEA Board Secretariat |
| Charles Barnett\* | Head of Finance, Business Support Team, NIEA |
| Philip Walker | Accountant, Business Support Team, NIEA |
| Charlotte Stewart | Head of Governance, Business Support Team, NIEA |
| Jacqui Girvan\* | NICS HR – DAERA Business Partner, DoF |
| Benjamin Robson | NIEA Board Secretariat |
| Amanda Logan | Head of Environmental Crime Unit, NIEA |
| Niall Davey | Head of Financial Investigations Team, NIEA |
| Claire O’Neill | Project Manager, Mobuoy Remediation Project |
| Emma Warwick\* | Accountant, Business Support Team, NIEA |
| Karl Beattie\* | Head of Environmental Governance and OEP Liaison Branch, EMFG |

\*Attended via WebEx video conference

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | **Action** |
| **1** | **Apologies and Conflicts of Interest**  No apologies. No new conflicts of interest were recorded.  Paul Donnelly welcomed all those able to attend in person and those via video conference. |  |
| **2** | **Minutes and Matters Arising from Meeting on 16 November 2022**  The Board agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2022. Matters arising were discussed.  The following action points were carried forward:   * Possible future presentation to the Board on the work of the Environmental Crime Unit to be discussed with Amanda Logan   Given current resource and work pressures within ECU it was agreed this action point would be deferred to a future date.   * Examine the potential use of Carrier Bag Levy (CBL) income going forward * Arrange a meeting to discuss NIEA Framework Document to include discussion on resourcing options for NIEA * Discuss the prioritisation of NIEA vacancies and examine which vacancies should be filled first. * Prepare final version of NIEA Risk Register for discussion at NIEA Risk Management meeting on 9 December 2022. * Consider a presentation on data security / cyber attacks at a future Board meeting. * Paul Donnelly to write to NICSHR with respect to the prioritisation of filling fee paying posts. | **Richard Crowe**    **Paul Donnelly / Finance Team**  **Paul Donnelly / NIEA Directors**  **Paul Donnelly / NIEA Directors**  **BST**  **Board Secretariat**  **Paul Donnelly** |
| **3** | **HR Monthly Report**  Jacqui Girvan presented the R HR Update paper to the Board. She updated the board on the latest position in relation to staff in post, temporary promotions, agency staff, filling of approved vacancies, recruitment competitions, performance management and absence management. The Board noted the latest position.  Jacqui advised of an upward trend in long term sickness absence in NIEA but noted this may be seasonal and would be better reassessed in January. Paul Donnelly noted that position. There was a brief discussion on absence management and reasons for resignations. Paul Douglas asked if exit interviews were conducted and if any information was available with respect to exit interviews.  Richard Crowe noted that with respect to Higher Scientific Officer grade, vacancy management remains a particular challenge. Jacqui also confirmed that the Grade 6 / Grade 7 competition has been put back to first quarter 2023 recruitment plan.  Paul Donnelly advised of possible resource issues going forward and potential impact on business planning. Paul Douglas concurred and that work prioritisation may be an issue. Paul Donnelly advised the Board that renewed thinking on how we operate is important given continued resource challenges.  The following action point was agreed:   * Jacqui Girvan to check with Business Management Branch if exit interview information is available. | **Jacqui Girvan** |
| **4** | **Finance and Corporate Governance**  The board discussed the various issues arising from the finance and corporate governance paper and the board:   * Noted the in-year spend for both Resource DEL and Capital DEL for 2022-23; * Noted the January Monitoring Round submission; * Noted the current position relating to the relevant risk registers; * Noted the current position relation to business planning; * Notedthe update on the Klondyke Building Premises and Klondyke Daily Attendance; * Notedthe update on Training, update on fleet management and the Environmental Economists; * Noted the update on Workforce Planning and update on New Ways of Working (NWoW); * Noted the update on the Covid-19 Inquiry preparation; * Noted the purpose of the Board and that it is proposed to begin a review of the Terms of Reference subject to other prevailing priorities and circumstances.   Philip Walker advised of successful bids in the final monitoring round and that spend profile was broadly on track with no cause for concern at this time. While no concerns expressed at this stage, Philip Walker reiterated the importance of a focus on budget spend, particularly capital, as we move towards year-end. The Board noted and concurred.  Philip Walker advised that Finance Team continue to roll out weekly finance training to teams across NIEA / EMFG and that engagement continues to be very positive. The Board noted and expressed thanks to the commitment of Finance Team in this regard.  Charles Barnett and Emma Warwick raised the issue of an Account NI shutdown in February 2023 as part of a system upgrade. Given the potential impact Charles Barnett advised that all business areas should consider where practicable bringing forward payments. The Board noted the potential impact and Paul Donnelly thanked all in finance for their advice and input at this time.  Charlotte Stewart advised of a very positive NIEA Risk Management Group meeting on 9 December 2022 with a fresh approach mapped out for risk management going forward.  With respect to accommodation Charlotte Stewart highlighted the importance of Managers focusing on the review of stored items and reiterated the importance of staff not making any changes to designated workstations in the Klondyke building.  Charlotte Stewart advised the allocated training budget for this year is nearly used up. We hope to see progress with the fleet management contract in the first quarter of 2023. There was a brief general discussion on vehicle management within the Agency.  Charlotte advised that workstyle agreements should now be in place and reminded staff of the rules associated with Covid-19 and sickness absence. Requests for information associated with the Covid-19 Inquiry currently being managed.  The following action point was agreed:   * Board secretariat to include an agenda item on NIEA vehicle usage at the next NIEA Directors catchup meeting. Charlotte Stewart to be invited. | **Board Secretariat** |
| **5** | **Office of Environmental Protection (OEP) Update**  Karl Beattie thanked the Board for the opportunity to provide an update on the OEP. Karl advised of the OEP’s transparency and that not all of its functions are statutory. While staff are based in Northern Ireland (NI) they may not be working exclusively on NI issues.  The OEP is keen to learn about the NI environment. Positive engagement is the experience to date and further work going forward is planned on a number of issues including correspondence tracking. Karl advised the Board that while the OEP may contact NIEA directly, Karl’s branch, Environmental Governance and OEP Liaison Branch, in EMFG will coordinate communication with the OEP.  The following action point was agreed:   * NIEA Directors to discuss HRA/SEA processes with Karl Beattie and report back to Paul Donnelly. | **Richard Crowe / Mark Hammond / Karl Beattie** |
| **6** | **Mobuoy Case Update**  Richard Crowe introduced Amanda Logan and Claire O’Neill who provided their respective updates to the Board on Mobuoy. The Board was reminded of the sensitivity of the project given ongoing court proceedings.  Amanda Logan provided the Board with a verbal update on the Mobuoy case via a slide presentation. Legal proceedings are continuing and the next court hearing is scheduled for 27 January 2023.The Board noted the update and expressed thanks to all staff who have worked on and continue to work this case. |  |
| **7** | **Mobuoy Remediation Project Update**  Claire O’Neill presented her paper to the Board. This paper was to update the Board on the current work and progress of the Mobuoy Remediation Project, specifically since June 2022 taking into account ongoing legal proceedings. Claire O’Neill presented a slide presentation.  The Board:   * Noted the content of this six month update paper in relation to the progress of the Mobuoy Remediation ICT in particular the completion of the Detailed Quantitative Risk Assessment (DQRA) and progress with the Industry Engagement on remediation options for the appraisal process; * Noted the current and future Mobuoy Remediation programme; * Noted the emerging budget risks.   Claire advised the Board that stakeholders are continually updated as appropriate with respect to ongoing legal proceedings. The Remediation Project Team also liaise as appropriate with DfI Roads with respect to their A6 Road Project.  Claire also advised of positive engagement with community stakeholders. Given continuing legal proceedings it was noted that information sharing progresses with caution.  A Gateway Review of the Remediation Project is next due in April 2023.  The Board expressed thanks to all staff involved in the Remediation Project and noted the important positive continued engagement with stakeholders.  A further update is planned in six months time. |  |
| **8** | **Consultations**  The Board noted the Consultations Master List. |  |
| **9** | **Health & Safety (H&S) Monthly Report**  The Board considered and no issues were raised with respect to the Monthly Report.  Board secretariat confirmed that the DAERA Health & Safety Advisor is scheduled to attend the January Board meeting. |  |
| **10** | **Communications & Staff Engagement**  Stevie Norrie provided a brief update on staff communications activities:  The  EMFG / NIEA staff webinar was held on 21 November 2022 and featured updates by Directors. A Christmas note to staff will issue later in December.  A new timetable for webinars ( April and October ) and staff newsletters  ( March, June, September and December ) was proposed for 2023. The Board approved.  The communications officer Laura Darragh continues to prepare news stories for the intranet, DAERA Digest and Social Media.  The Business Support Team will be bringing forward a paper to the EMFG / NIEA Joint Directors meeting in February with proposals for the management of communications going forward. |  |
| **11** | **Papers for Future NIEA Board Meetings**  The board agreed the schedule of papers to be tabled at the January Board meeting and discussed potential papers for future meetings.  The following action point was agreed:   * Mark Hammond to discuss a presentation on COP15 at the January Board meeting with Sara McGuckin | **Mark Hammond / Sara McGuckin** |
| **12** | **AOB**  Paper 22-12-7 Planning Response Team – Drive Improvement Submission was discussed. Paul Donnelly led a brief discussion on addressing pressures in planning consultation work. It was agreed that Mark Hammond and Natural Environment colleagues will consider further and present the Board with refreshed thinking around matters under NIEA control. The Board agreed a more radical approach was needed going forward.  The following action point was agreed:  Further paper on Planning Response Consultations to be brought forward to future NIEA Board meeting. | **Mark Hammond** |