**Summary of the NIEA Board Meeting**

**2 August 2022, via Webex Video Conference**

Members in Attendance:

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

Other Attendees:

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| Marcus McAuley | Acting Director Strategic Planning & Change Division, NIEA |
| Stephen Norrie | NIEA Board Secretariat |
| Philip Walker | Accountant, Business Support Team, NIEA ( deputising for Charles Barnett, Head of Finance, Business Support Team, NIEA) |
| Charlotte Stewart | Head of Governance and Corporate Services, Business Support Team, NIEA |
| Jacqui Girvan | NICS HR – DAERA Business Partner, DoF |

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|  |  | **Action** |
| **1** | **Apologies and Conflicts of Interest**  Apologies from Charles Barnett. No new conflicts of interest were recorded.  Paul Donnelly introduced Philip Walker to the meeting, deputising for Charles Barnett. |  |
| **2** | **Minutes and Matters Arising from Meeting on 2 August 2022**  The board noted a minor spelling amendment and agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 2 August 2022. Matters arising were discussed. It was agreed Action Point 1 with respect to procurement could be marked as complete.  The following action points were carried forward:   * Meeting to be arranged in August to discuss Carrier Bag Levy (CBL) income * Future presentation to NIEA Board, possibly September, on work involved in the preparation of Annual Report and Accounts | **Marcus McAuley / Charles Barnett / Philip Walker**  **Charles Barnett** |
| **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, recruitment competitions, filling of approved vacancies, temporary promotions, agency staff, performance management, absence management and learning and development. The board noted the latest position.  Paul Donnelly noted the Boards appreciation of good progression on the filling of vacant posts. Paul Donnelly reiterated the importance of a continued focus on having PPA’s and PDP’s completed on the HR Connect system.  Paul Douglas noted the good news in relation to NIEA’s performance with respect to days lost due to sickness absence. The Board concurred.  Marcus McAuley highlighted NIEA’s reliance on specialist posts and the challenge this presents in filling vacant posts at a time when the NICS has a specific focus on running general service competitions to address resource pressures. Paul Donnelly confirmed this has been recognised by the Permanent Secretary and raised at Departmental Board (DB). Jacqui Girvan noted this was also featuring in a paper currently being prepared for DB.  Marcus McAuley expressed thanks to Jacqui Girvan for the inclusion of the list of vacancies (Annex C) in her HR Update paper. The Board concurred. |  |
| **4** | **Finance and Corporate Governance**  The board discussed the various issues arising from the finance and corporate governance paper and the board:   * Noted the net spend for both Resource DEL and Capital DEL for the first quarter of 2022-23; * Noted the commissioning of the October Monitoring Round later in August 2022; * Noted the current position relating to the relevant risk registers; * Notedthe update on the Klondyke Building Premises, Klondyke Daily Attendance and Klondyke First Aid and Fire Warden needs; * 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 purpose of the Board.   Philip Walker advised that year to date spend was broadly on track against profile given normal trends on spend by the Agency.  Philip Walker advised that the outcome of the June monitoring round would be advised at the September Board meeting and that the October monitoring round was commissioned on 1 August 2022.  The Business Support Team plan to deliver finance training sessions during September, both in-person and via video conference. Philip Walker encouraged staff who require finance training to attend, irrespective of grade.  Charlotte Stewart advised the Board that a Risk Management Group meeting was scheduled for 9 September 2022 and encouraged business areas to review their risk assessments in preparation.  Charlotte advised that focus will continue on final preparation of the draft NIEA 2022-23 Business Plan. Paul Donnelly proposed the Plan should be discussed at the September Board meeting and the Board agreed.  Charlotte advised that average attendance in the Klondyke building was reduced in July to 32, from 51 in June, as expected over the summer holiday period.  Charlotte Stewart encouraged Directors to highlight the need for as many staff as possible in business areas to complete Fire Warden training to ensure adequate cover under the new working regime.  Marcus McAuley encouraged Directors to check the vacancy list (Annex C) provided in the HR Update paper given the continued focus on workforce planning.  Marcus McAuley provided an update on New Ways of Working (NWoW) advising that discussions and implementation of Workstyle Agreements could now progress with the implementation of hybrid working arrangements.  There are planned meetings with premises officers going forward in preparation for NWoW.  The following action points were agreed:   * Director of Estate Management to be contacted with respect to staff attendance at planned premises staff meeting(s).   The Board discussed the future proposed move to Clare House and agreed to discuss any issues arising as and when required going forward. | **Marcus McAuley** |
| **5** | **Covid 19 Update**  Paul Donnelly updated the board on issues being dealt with by NIEA in response to the ongoing Covid-19 situation and advised continued caution as infection was still prevalent.  Paul Donnelly proposed the Covid 19 standing agenda item be removed from future meetings and that updates and issues related to the Covid 19 Inquiry would be covered in the Finance and Governance Update. The Board agreed.  Paul Donnelly highlighted the importance of the Covid 19 Inquiry and the need to respond to requests for information. The Executive Office has established a Departmental Covid Inquiry Preparation Group and DAERA will be providing regular highlight reports reflecting the Department’s preparedness to provide information to the Inquiry.  Charlotte Stewart proposed a joint NIEA / EMFG approach to the Inquiry and that the Business Support Team would manage requests for information. The Board agreed to this approach and agreed that Charlotte should proceed with a joint EMFG/NIEA return with respect to the recent request for initial information. |  |
| **7** | **Consultations**  The Board noted the Consultations List which was last updated in June. Mark Hammond advised that a consultation on the Strategic Way Forward for Wildfires will be added in the future, possibly in the autumn/winter period. |  |
| **8** | **Health & Safety (H&S) Monthly Report**  Marcus McAuley presented the H&S monthly update paper to the Board.  The Board noted the position in the monthly H&S update. Paul Donnelly led a brief discussion on anti-social behaviour issues arising out of the recent large visitor numbers to Crawfordsburn Country Park during very hot weather. Mark Hammond confirmed there were no H&S issue arising for NIEA staff. |  |
| **9** | **Communications & Staff Engagement**  Stevie Norrie provided a brief update on staff communications activities:  Central Communications and Engagement Division (CAED) convened an editorial board to develop a DAERA Story booklet to describe the varied nature of DAERA’s work. Laura Darragh and Group Coordinators have been invited to sit on this Board. This booklet will be issued within regional newspapers. Laura will liaise with NIEA and EMFG Directors to develop content for the booklet;  CAED are conducting a review of internal communications within DAERA. Laura Darragh and Group Coordinators will represent NIEA and EMFG on the forum;  Laura Darragh is preparing a paper on Communications needs across NIEA and EMFG.  Laura continues to work on producing internal news stories including the recent story on the Head of Civil Service and DAERA Permanent Secretary visit to Crawfordsburn Country Park following the large visitor numbers during the recent hot weather spell.  Laura Darragh continues to attend meetings of the Inter Agency Communications Group on COP15;  The next staff webinar is scheduled for 27 September. |  |
| **10** | **Papers for Future NIEA Board Meetings**  The board agreed the schedule of papers to be tabled at the September Board meeting and discussed potential papers for future meetings. |  |
| **11** | **AOB**  Paul Donnelly expressed his thanks to all staff for their continued hard work given current challenging times and work pressures. Paul made specific reference to the huge efforts of regional operational staff in dealing with issues arising out of increased visitor numbers during the recent spell of hot weather. HOCs and DAERA Permanent Secretary visited Crawfordsburn Country Park to see at first hand the issues being dealt with by staff. Paul extended his thanks and gratitude to staff for their hard work and professionalism at Crawfordsburn.  The Board agreed the September meeting should be a mixture of in-person and video conference. |  |