**Summary of the NIEA Board Meeting**

**2 November 2021, via Webex Video Conference**

**(Environment, Marine and Fisheries Group Senior Management in attendance)**

Members in Attendance:

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| Paul Donnelly | Acting Chief Executive, NIEA (Chair) |
| Helen Anderson | Director of Natural Environment Division, NIEA |
| Keith Bradley | Acting Director of Resource Efficiency Division, NIEA |
| Paul Douglas | Non-Executive Board Member |

Other Attendees:

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| Tracey Teague | Deputy Secretary, EMFG. |
| Dave Foster | Director of Regulatory & Natural Resources Policy Division, EMFG |
| John Mills | Director of EU Transition Division, EMFG |
| Owen Lytle | Director of Marine and Fisheries Division, EMFG |
| Colin Breen | Acting Director of Environmental Policy Division, EMFG |
| Marcus McAuley | Acting Director Strategic Planning & Change Division, NIEA |
| Charlotte Stewart | Head of Governance and Corporate Services, Business Support Team, NIEA |
| Philip Walker | Head of Finance, Business Support Team, NIEA |
| Stephen Norrie | NIEA Board Secretariat |
| Jacqui Girvan | NICS HR – DAERA Business Partner, DoF |
| Arron Wright | Acting Director Green Growth & Climate Action Division |
| Maia Taylor | NED Brexit & Operational Change (& Outdoor Recreation team) ( Deputising for Mark Hammond, Head of Natural Environment Operations Division) |

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|  |  | **Action** |
| **1** | **Apologies and Conflicts of Interest**Apologies from Kevin Hegarty. Helen Anderson and Arron Wright also registered apologies for joining the meeting slightly late due to attendance at other events. No new conflicts of interest were recorded.Paul Donnelly welcomed Maia Taylor to the meeting. |  |
| **2** | **Minutes and Matters Arising from Meeting on 2 November 2021**The board agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 2 November 2021 and discussed matters arising.The board noted a very successful visit to CAFRE Glenwhirry Farm on 14 October. Thanks were expressed to Martin McKendry and his team for hosting the board and DAERA Permanent Secretary on a very positive and enjoyable experience. The following action points were carried forward: * Review of AD Plants and digestate:

 (a) Submit a short update paper to the board via correspondence in September providing clarity on the NIAO recommendations and DAERA legislative requirements.(b) Consider the regulatory and policy positions* HR Update: Check the position on Grade 7 recruitment competitions that are likely to run post-December 2021.

NICSHR Resourcing is currently working with Departments to establish baselines and identify gaps at all grades, including Grade 7, in order to develop the next phase of the NICS Recruitment Plan which will identify priority resourcing needs across the NICS. The Board agreed to maintain a watching brief on this. * Vacancy Management: Current vacancy management issues to be discussed.
* NIEA Board: Discuss future approach to the format and operation of Board meetings. Tracey Teague to be consulted.
* Site Visits: Discuss incidents of aggressive behaviour during site visits with Michael Hatch ( Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer )
* Waste Tracking Update Paper ( upcoming correspondence paper ): Clarify the issue of resource requirements.
 | **Brian McVeigh / Keith Bradley****Keith Bradley / Colin Breen****Laura McMichael****Paul Donnelly / Marcus McAuley / Helen Anderson / Tracey Teague****Paul Donnelly / Marcus McAuley****Marcus McAuley****Colin Breen / Keith Bradley** |
| **3** | **HR Monthly Report**Jacqui Girvan updated the board on the latest position in relation to recruitment competitions, filling of approved vacancies, temporary promotions, agency staff, performance management, absence management, student placement scheme and learning and development. The board noted the latest position.Jacqui reminded the board of the importance of Managers registering vacancies on HR Connect and also ensuring staff have an entry on PPA’s in relation to mandatory training.Some discussion took place on the issue of supply against demand across the grades. The board noted the importance of filling vacancies and the need in particular for recruitment plans to address the filling of vacancies at G6 and G7 grades. Owen Lyttle noted the impact of retirements on vacancies within Marine and Fisheries Division and expressed thanks to HR colleagues for their continuing efforts on vacancy management. The board concurred.The following action point was agreed:* Provide some comparison figures on retrospective HR statistics.
 | **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 net spend for both Resource DEL and Capital DEL for the first six months of 2021-22;
* Notedthe content of the January Monitoring Round submission;
* Noted the current position relating to the relevant risk registers;
* Noted the current position relating to progress of DAERA 2021/22 Business Targets and NIEA 2021/22 Business Plan Targets;
* Notedthe Workforce Planning update and this covered the action point on vacancy management;
* Notedthe update on the Klondyke Building Premises & Klondyke Daily Attendance;
* Notedthe update on Training;
* Noted the update on Environmental Economists.

Philip Walker advised the Board that salary spend and resource spend was on profile. Capital spending was currently lower against profile and will be monitored going forward when January monitoring position is clear.January monitoring return for EMFG/NIEA was submitted to Strategic Planning Branch (SPB) on 22 October 2021 and additional staff costs of £400k were included in the bids.Subject to Ministers agreement, draft budgets will issue early November from DoF with a consultation period of twelve weeks. Charlotte Stewart advised the board that the draft 2021-22 NIEA Business Plan was out to NIEA Divisions for a final review and tidy up.There were no concerns expressed with targets in the six month review of DAERA Business Plan and SPB had also commissioned initial input to the 2022-23 DAERA Business Plan. After some discussion the board noted that resource issues could potentially impact targets but agreed that current targets should form the basis of any initial return.Work continuing with Estates Management Branch in relation to how the Klondyke building will be used going forward once the service mapping exercise is completed.The following action point was agreed:* Provide further detail on current year capital spend.
 | **Philip Walker** |
| **5** | **Environment Fund November 2021**Helen Anderson introduced this paper. Owen Lyttle stated that for reasons of a potential conflict of interest he would not be taking part in any discussion or decision making in relation to this paper. The board noted this. Maia Taylor gave a slide presentation. Following discussion the board;* Approved in principle the proposed increase in funding levels;
* Approved in principle that the fourth year of the current Environment Fund should proceed;
* Agreed in principle Strategic Strand and Strand 2 Letters of Offer for 2022-23 should be issued in December 2021;
* Noted the proposed opening of a Challenge Fund for 2022-23;
* Noted the undertaking of a review of the Environment Fund and consulting on future needs for the period after 31 March 2023.

Marcus McAuley raised the issue of potential future budget cuts from 2022/23 and the board agreed that the wording in letters of offer should include clauses that allow funding offers to be adjusted or withdrawn if that matter arises.During discussion the board also agreed that we’re in a different place now in terms of scale and complexity of work. It is important to focus on joint strategic work requirements, delivery mechanisms and a long term outlook in a context of Green Growth. The need to have early conversations in relation to policy drivers, work required, outcomes, resource priorities and funding across the business was also noted.The following action point was agreed:* Consider a linked approach to funding of projects going forward.
 | **Paul Donnelly / Tracey Teague / Arron Wright / Helen Anderson / Owen Lyttle** |
| **6** | **MyNI Review**Colin Breen presented his review of MyNI paper. The board was asked to discuss the preferred option that the MyNI Pilot should cease at the end of the pilot period in December 2021. Marcus McAuley highlighted the need for continued support for staff communications within EMFG/NIEA going forward.During discussion the excellent work of the staff in the MyNI Team was highlighted and the board thanked Colin Breen for conducting the review. Colin Breen requested board members to provide their feedback to him by close of play on 12th November 2021.  |  |
| **7** | **Covid 19 Update** Paul Donnelly updated the board on issues being dealt with by NIEA and EMFG in response to the ongoing Covid-19 situation and the Board noted the position. |  |
| **8** | **EU Transition Update**John Mills updated the board on ongoing environmental issues related to EU exit. Negotiations in relation the Northern Ireland Protocol were ongoing. The Board noted the latest position. |  |
| **9** | **Consultations**The Board noted the Consultations currently listed. |  |
| **10** | **Health & Safety Monthly Report**The board discussed the monthly Health & Safety report and noted the latest position.  |  |
| **11** | **Communications & Staff Engagement**Stevie Norrie provided a brief update on staff communications activities and that a paper on recent staff communications survey would issue via correspondence during November. The board noted the position.  |  |
| **12** | **Papers for Future NIEA Board Meetings**The board agreed the schedule of papers to be tabled at the December board meeting and discussed potential papers for future meetings.  |  |
| **13** | **AOB**None discussed. |  |