

**Minutes of Board Meeting No. 123 held on Monday 15 December 2025  
at Marlborough House, Craigavon.**

**Present:**

Aoife Hamilton, Deputy Chief Commissioner (Chair)  
Hugh McKeag, Charity Commissioner  
Kieran Donaghy, Charity Commissioner  
Leanne McCullough, Charity Commissioner  
Alan Hunter, Charity Commissioner  
Patricia Kelly, Legal Commissioner

**In Attendance:**

Frances McCandless, Chief Executive  
Punam McGookin, Head of Charity Services  
Rossa Keown, Head of Compliance and Enquiries  
Aubrey McCrory, Head of Corporate Services  
David McGurk, Finance & Admin Officer  
Tanya Martin, Legal Advisor, Item 5a & 5b  
Padraig Quinn, Casework Manager, Item 5d & 5e

**Apologies:**

Gerard McCurdy, Chief Commissioner

The meeting commenced at 9.30am. The Chair welcomed everyone, outlined the Chief Commissioner's apologies and indicated some agenda items would be taken out of sequence.

**2. Conflicts of Interest**

The Chair asked Board members to declare any conflicts relating to agenda items. Alan Hunter and Leanne McCullough highlighted previously declared conflicts of interest as members of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and noted that they had recused themselves from any decision making. The Board noted that Patricia Kelly, Gerard McCurdy and Alan Hunter had potential perceived conflicts of interest regarding Féile An Phobail and had recused themselves from related decision making. The Chair reminded Commissioners of their responsibility to recuse themselves from decision making in relation to any potential perceived conflict of interests.

**5a. Legal update**

The Legal Advisor gave a high-level overview of cases in progress and an update on Tribunal and Court cases. Questions were addressed, and Commissioners noted the Attorney General's Office had made a submission in relation to a Commission application for an appeal. The information was provided on a legally privileged and confidential basis and was duly noted by the Board.

## **5b. Legal manual and standing orders amendments**

The Legal Advisor introduced and gave an overview of the proposed changes and additions to the manual. Several queries were addressed and following discussion the Board agreed to adopt version 8.0 of the legal manual as proposed by Patricia Kelly and seconded by Alan Hunter.

The Legal Advisor highlighted the revised legal manual required an amendment to the Board's standing orders. Following discussion, it was agreed to amend the orders to enable decision makers to direct staff to affix the Commission's seal, as proposed by Leanne McCullough seconded by Hugh McKeag.

Tanya Martin left the meeting 10.05am

Following a query the Chief Executive outlined the existing conflict of interest section of the standing orders. After discussion it was agreed to update and expand these as proposed by Hugh McKeag and seconded by Kieran Donaghy.

**AP1: Legal Manual v8.0 to be implemented.**

**AP2: Amended Board Standing Orders to be published.**

### **1. Minutes of Board Meeting 122, 10 November 2025**

Following discussion, the minutes of the Board Meeting held on 10 November 2025 were agreed, subject to a minor amendment, for publication on the Commission's website, as proposed by Hugh McKeag and seconded by Patricia Kelly. The Board noted the progress of the Action Points from the last meeting.

**AP3: Minutes of Board Meeting No 122, 10 November 2025 to be published on CCNI website.**

### **3. Chair's Business, Correspondence and Meetings**

The Chair outlined an update provided by the Chief Commissioner including attendance at a Department for Communities (DfC) Arm's Length Bodies Chairs' Forum and annual appraisal with the department. The Board noted Gerard McCurdy's thanks to them and to the staff for their work over the past year. An update was provided on the recent Stakeholder forum meeting.

### **4. Chief Executive's Report**

The Chief Executive introduced her report and, following discussion of recent Schedule 1 committee meetings, several follow up steps were agreed. The Board noted the position on approval for a Grade 7 legal post business case, which the Chair had raised with senior officials, and separately noted recent correspondence between the sponsor team and the ARAC Chair. Arrangements for the forthcoming public meeting were agreed.

**AP4: HOCE to write to Lord Alderdice.**

## 5. Policies and Processes

### **c. Retention and disposal update**

The Head of Corporate Services introduced the update and highlighted the key points of the review. Following discussion, the Board indicated it would follow the approach of the Charity Commission for England & Wales as proposed by Leanne McCullough and seconded by Kieran Donaghy.

### **AP5: Records Management Policy and Retention Schedule to be updated in 2026/27.**

Padraig Quinn joined the meeting 11.20am

### **d. Registration Manual – updated for threshold**

The Casework Manager provided an overview of the changes to streamline the manual and to create an interim process to facilitate a process for those choosing not to register following commencement of the legislation. Following discussion, the Board agreed the updates to the registration manual as proposed by Hugh McKeag seconded by Leanne McCullough. The Board noted the approach of key funders and agreed it would take a balanced approach in communications and notifications to Trustees and charities relating to the introduction of a registration threshold.

The Casework Manager highlighted the manual would be updated to reflect changes to Information Technology (IT) systems to enable the threshold to be operated in line with the registration manual. Following discussion, it was agreed these details could be added at a later date, without the need to revert back to the Board as proposed by Kieran Donaghy seconded by Alan Hunter.

### **AP6: Updated Registration manual to be implemented.**

### **e. Older Casework Overview**

The Casework Manager introduced the paper giving an overview of various older cases and how they are triaged. The Board noted this was a very useful paper and asked for similar updates in the future.

Padraig Quinn left the meeting 11.30am

## 6. Reports from Committees

### **Assurance & Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC)**

#### **a. Minutes of meeting No 67 – 25 November 2025**

Following discussion, the minutes of the ARAC meeting held on 25 November 2025 were approved for publication, as proposed by Alan Hunter and seconded by Leanne McCullough.

### **AP7: Minutes of A&RA Committee No 67 – 25 November 2025 to be published on the website.**

**b. Corporate Risk Register**

The Chair of ARAC introduced the current Corporate Risk Register and highlighted two proposed changes to increase risk ratings relating to staff turnover and enquiries. Following discussion, the revised risk register was adopted by the Board as proposed by Hugh McKeag seconded by Kieran Donaghy.

**c. Information Security Policy**

The Chair of ARAC introduced the review paper noting the committee had accepted no changes were appropriate at this time. Commissioners were content with this position.

**d. Review of the Concerns about the Commission Policy**

The Chair of ARAC introduced the results of the review of the current policy and minor changes recommended by ARAC. Following discussion, the Board agreed the recommended changes as proposed by Hugh McKeag seconded by Patricia Kelly.

**AP8: Updated Concerns about the Commission Policy to be implemented.**

**Schedule 1 Decisions**

**e. Three Commissioners Committee**

Plans for additional Schedule 1 meetings noted.

**7. Corporate Services Report**

The Head of Corporate Services introduced their report highlighting various strategic issues and challenges. The Board noted the office relocation update, project initiation meetings with contractor developing new online forms and management of November monitoring round budget bids. Following discussion, the Board agreed to extend the current lease for accommodation in Marlborough House to the end of June 2026, and for the Chief Executive to confirm this with Department of Finance (DoF) as proposed by Alan Hunter and seconded by Hugh McKeag.

**AP9: CEx to confirm acceptance of lease extension with DoF.**

**8. Charity Services Report**

The Head of Charity Services introduced their report noting various casework progress, trends and details of high-profile cases, which the Board noted. The Head of Charity Services outlined two minor proposed changes to the Board approved Casework manual and associated internal guidance which related to the Scheme of Delegation. After discussion, the Board agreed the changes as proposed by Hugh McKeag seconded by Patricia Kelly.

**AP10: Updated Casework manual to be implemented.**

## **9. Compliance and Enquiries Report**

The Head of Compliance and Enquiries introduced their report and gave an update on current high-profile concerns and work to implement updates to the Enquires manual. The Board noted plans to focus on filing defaulters in the 2026/27 Business Plan.

## **10. Issues for next meeting**

The Chair noted the following items are likely to be included at the next meeting on 2 February 2026:

- Board self-assessment
- Review LAG
- Incorporations manual
- Social media paper
- Stakeholder Forum update
- Threshold regs

## **11. AOB**

The Chair noted that representatives from NICVA and CO3 would join the Board at the end of their next meeting. The Chair thanked everyone for their work throughout the year and wished everyone season's greetings and best wishes for the new year.

Meeting ended at 12.10pm

### Register of Outstanding Action Points

| <b>Board Meeting and Action Point Number</b> | <b>Date Raised</b> | <b>Agenda Item</b> | <b>Action</b>  | <b>Owners</b> | <b>Status (target)</b> |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|--|---------------|------------------------|
| 123(1)                                       | 15/12/2025         | 5b                 | Legal Manual v8.0 to be implemented.   | Legal Advisor | Complete               |
| 123(2)                                       | 15/12/2025         | 5b                 | Amended Board Standing Orders to be published.                                     | Legal Advisor | Complete               |
| 123(3)                                       | 15/12/2025         | 1                  | Minutes of Board Meeting No 122, 10 November 2025 to be published on CCNI website. | Comms         | Complete               |
| 123(4)                                       | 15/12/2025         | 4                  | HOCE to write to Lord Alderdice.   | HOCE          | Complete               |
| 123(5)                                       | 15/12/2025         | 5c                 | Records Management Policy and Retention Schedule to be updated in 2026/27.         | HCorpS        | Ongoing (Q3 26/27)     |
| 123(6)                                       | 15/12/2025         | 5d                 | Updated Registration manual to be implemented.                                     | HCS           | Ongoing (Q2 26/27)     |
| 123(7)                                       | 15/12/2025         | 6a                 | Minutes of A&RA Committee No 67 – 25 November 2025 to be published on the website. | Comms         | Complete               |
| 123(8)                                       | 15/12/2025         | 6d                 | Updated Concerns about the Commission Policy to be implemented.                    | HCorpS        | Complete               |
| 123(9)                                       | 15/12/2025         | 7                  | CEx to confirm acceptance of lease extension with DoF.                             | CEx           | Complete               |

|         |            |    |  |                |                                |
|---------|------------|----|--|----------------|--------------------------------|
| 123(10) | 15/12/2025 | 8  | Updated Casework manual to be implemented.   | HCS            | Ongoing (Q3 25/26)             |
| 122(4)  | 10/11/2025 | 4  | Commission to commence appeal of Charity Tribunal decision on Commission reference.  | CEx            | Complete                       |
| 122(6)  | 10/11/2025 | 5a | CRAT to be integrated into the Board approved Enquiries manual.  | HCE            | Ongoing (Q3 25/26)             |
| 122(8)  | 10/11/2025 | 5b | Further enhancement of guidance to be discussed with representative groups.  | Policy Manager | Ongoing (Q4 25/26)             |
| 122(11) | 10/11/2025 | 5d | Strategic plan document to be developed reflecting Board decision.   | HCorpS         | Ongoing (Q4 25/26)             |
| 122(12) | 10/11/2025 | 5d | Consultation report to be finalised for publication pending approval of the finalised strategic plan.                                    | HCorpS         | Ongoing (Q4 25/26)             |
| 122(13) | 10/11/2025 | 5e | Revised draft business plan to be brought to the February Board meeting along with strategic plan.                                       | HCorpS         | Ongoing March Board (Q4 25/26) |
| 122(14) | 10/11/2025 | 5f | Report on social media usage to February Board meeting.  | Comms          | Complete                       |
| 120(9)  | 23/06/2025 | 7  | AI Pilot Policy to be implemented  | HCorpS         | Complete                       |
| 120(10) | 23/06/2025 | 7  | Commission to seek to participate in SIB and DfC AI Pilots.  | HCorpS         | Complete                       |
| 118(5)  | 24/03/2025 | 5a | Amended manuals and related SIG to be implemented.   | HCS            | Ongoing (Q3 25/26)             |
| 118(6)  | 24/03/2025 | 5a | Scheme of Delegation assurance checks to be implemented.   | HCS            | Complete                       |
| 117(4)  | 03/02/2025 | 5d | Additional proportionate process to be put in place to identify and address any open amendment clauses relating to registered charities. | HCS            | Ongoing (Q3 25/26)             |

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|----------|------------|----|---|----------------|--|
| 116(6)   | 16/12/2024 | 5c | Retention schedule to be fully updated and brought to the February board meeting.   | HCorpS         | Complete   |
| 116(9)   | 16/12/2024 | 6c | Staff to be briefed and updated information security to be implemented.   | HCorpS         | Ongoing (Q3 25/26)                                       |
| 115(8)   | 11/11/2024 | 5f | Explore sending newsletter to charity contact emails and discuss options for developing regular communication with the sector with the Stakeholder Forum. | Comms Officer  | Complete   |
| 115(10)  | 11/11/2024 | 6b | A review of hybrid working policy to be undertaken following office relocation.   | HR Cttee       | Ongoing (Q3 26/27)                                       |
| 104(2)   | 27/03/2023 | 3  | Litigation to be progressed in line with legal advice.  | Chair/CE x     | Ongoing (25/26)  |
| 102 (10) | 19/12/2022 | 5f | Action plan including disposal schedule to be implemented.  | HCorpS         | Complete   |
| 98 (7)   | 16/05/2022 | 5e | Training in complaint handling and dealing with trauma to be arranged.  | CEx/<br>HCorpS | Trauma element Complete<br>Complaint handling (Q4 25-26) |
| 94 (3)   | 15/11/21   | 5a | Corporate Social Responsibility policy to be developed as part of the next strategic planning process.  | HCorpS         | Ongoing (Q4 25/26)                                       |