

**Minutes of Board Meeting No. 124 held on Monday 2 February 2026
at Marlborough House, Craigavon.**

Present:

Gerard McCurdy, 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
Shirley Kernan, Communications Officer, Item 5a

Apologies:

Aoife Hamilton, Deputy Chief Commissioner

The meeting commenced at 9.30am.

1. Minutes of Board Meeting 123, 15 December 2025

Following discussion, the minutes of the Board Meeting held on 15 December 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 and agreed to stand down action point 98 (7) in light of new complaints handling guidance being rolled out by the Ombudsman.

AP1: Minutes of Board Meeting No 123, 15 December 2025 to be published on CCNI website.

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 already 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. The Chair reminded Commissioners of their responsibility to recuse themselves from decision making in relation to any potential perceived conflict of interests.

3. Chair's Business, Correspondence and Meetings

The Chair noted that Celine McStravick from the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA) and Valerie McConville (CO3) would join at the conclusion of the meeting to outline and discuss key issues facing the charity sector. The Chair noted very positive feedback from attendees at the recent Commission annual public meeting (22 January 2026) and thanked everyone for their work.

4. Chief Executive's Report

The Chief Executive introduced her report noting a recent budget scenario exercise completed by staff and discussions with DfC regarding charity reporting thresholds. Commissioners also noted an issue regarding the Charity Tribunal, whereby it is unable to review its own decisions. The Chief Executive undertook to highlight this to the sponsor department. She highlighted the forthcoming meeting with the Minister and potential issues to be discussed were identified. The Board agreed to extend Caron Alexander's appointment as independent member of the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) for another year. Commissioners noted plans for annual staff charity visits. Plans for a board development session in the next financial year were agreed, budget permitting.

5. Policies and Processes

Shirley Kernan (Communications Officer) joined the meeting at 10.15am

a. Commission's Social Media presence

The Communications Officer introduced the report and briefed the Board on the Commission's development and usage of social media channels. Commissioners thanked staff for the comprehensive report and a range of queries were addressed. Following discussion of continuing a signposting presence on X and increasing risks, the Board agreed to come off X (formerly Twitter), prioritising LinkedIn and Youtube as the primary social media platforms and monitoring Bluesky for future viability, as proposed by Patricia Kelly and seconded by Leanne McCullough.

AP2: Commission's X account to be deleted.

Shirley Kernan (Communications Officer) left the meeting 10.45am

b. Board self-assessment exercise

The Board noted that self-assessment forms are to be returned to the Chief Executive by the end of February. The Chief Executive highlighted that for the year 2026/7 there will be an external assessment.

AP3: Board self-assessment to be circulated for Board to complete and return.

c. Stakeholder Forum update

The Head of Charity Services introduced the update from the last Stakeholder Forum held on 10 December 2025. Various aspects discussed at the forum and the overall positive feedback received were noted by the Board.

d. Draft Registration Threshold regulations

The Chief Executive introduced the draft regulations shared by the Department for Communities. Work on some aspects was still ongoing but at this time it was anticipated that the Scheme of Delegation would be amended to enable operation of a registration threshold. The Board noted the draft regulations would go through the Communities Committee shortly.

6. Reports from Committees

Schedule 1 Decisions

a. Three Commissioners Committee

- 17 October 2025 - noted
- 21 November 2025 - noted
- 12 December 2025 - noted

7. Corporate Services Report

The Head of Corporate Services introduced their report highlighting strategic work across the relocation, online forms and website projects. The Board noted floor plans had been signed off, with an indicative fit out timescale depending on the lease agreement being progressed by Land & Property Services. Recent and ongoing recruitment activity and appointments were noted. Queries on budget spend and business plan progress were addressed and Commissioners noted the progress of mid-year reviews.

8. Charity Services Report

The Head of Charity Services introduced their report noting various casework progress, trends and details of high-profile cases. The impact of staff turnover on business results at year end was discussed and Threshold Project Team progress was noted. A series of anticipated board papers were noted.

9. Compliance and Enquiries Report

The Head of Compliance and Enquiries introduced their report and gave an update on filing compliance rates. Current high-profile concerns and work to implement updates to the Enquires manual were detailed. The Board noted progress with extra decisions going to Schedule 1 and that a business case for additional resources for the enquiries team had been submitted to sponsor department.

10. Issues for next meeting

The Chair noted, in addition to committee business, the following items are likely to be included at the next meeting on 23 March 2026:

- Partnership Agreement compliance
- Legal update
- Draft business and strategic plans
- LAG update and review
- Review operation of scheme of delegation
- CCEW MOU
- Incorporations manual
- Enquiries options paper

11. AOB

None

Meeting ended at 11.30am

Representatives from NICVA and CO3 joined the Board at the end of the meeting.

Register of Outstanding Action Points

Board Meeting and Action Point Number	Date Raised	Agenda Item	Action	Owners	Status (target)
124(1)	02/02/2026	1	Minutes of Board Meeting No 123, 15 December 2025 to be published on CCNI website.	Comms	Complete
124(2)	02/02/2026	5a	Commission's X account to be deleted.	Comms	Complete
124(3)	02/02/2026	5b	Board self-assessment to be circulated for Board to complete and return.	FAO	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(10)	15/12/2025	8	Updated Casework manual to be implemented.	HCS	Complete
122(6)	10/11/2025	5a	CRAT to be integrated into the Board approved Enquiries manual.	HCE	Complete
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	Complete

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	Complete
118(5)	24/03/2025	5a	Amended manuals and related SIG 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 (Q1 26/27)
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 (Q1 26/27)
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 (26/27)
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)