

**Minutes of Board Meeting No. 126 held on Monday 11 May 2026
at Marlborough House, Craigavon.**

Present:

Gerard McCurdy, Chief Commissioner (Chair)
Aoife Hamilton, Deputy Chief Commissioner
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
Nicola Fisher, Finance & Admin Manager (items 6a-g)

Apologies:

The meeting commenced at 9.30am.

1. Minutes of Board Meeting 125, 23 March 2026

Following discussion, the minutes of the Board Meeting held on 23 March 2026 were agreed, subject to a minor amendment, for publication on the Commission's website, as proposed by Patricia Kelly and seconded by Aoife Hamilton. The Board noted the progress of the Action Points from the last meeting and agreed to stand down an action point 122(8).

AP1: Minutes of Board Meeting No 125, 23 March 2026 to be published on CCNI website.

2. Conflicts of Interest

The Chair asked Board members to declare any conflicts relating to agenda items. Previously declared conflicts of interest by Alan Hunter and Leanne McCullough as members of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and potential perceived conflicts by Patricia Kelly, Gerard McCurdy and Alan Hunter regarding Féile An Phobail were noted. Leanne McCullough highlighted her potential perceived conflict with DPOANI and Patricia Kelly highlighted her conflict of interest regarding Relatives for Justice, which the Board noted again. The Chair reminded Commissioners of their responsibility to recuse themselves from decision making in relation to any conflict of interests. Aoife Hamilton noted that she has a family connection to a recently appointed member of staff, but played no role in the appointment.

3. Chair's Business, Correspondence and Meetings

The Chair gave an update on the recent Department for Communities (DfC) Senior Leaders' Forum and the Risk & Assurance meeting with John Smith in Sponsor Department. The Chair thanked all Commissioners who participated in the programme of charity visits. The Board noted Patricia Kelly had recently been reappointed to the Board for five years.

4. Chief Executive's Report

The Chief Executive introduced her report and outlined several developments since the report was issued relating to DfC taking forward the draft Charities Bill. Several queries relating to provisions involving mandatory timescales, explanatory notes and anticipated commencement timescales were addressed. Following discussion of the Commission's current indicative budget position and resourcing to deliver the new legislation it was agreed the Chair would write to Minister on behalf of the Board regarding lack of resources and expectations for delivering the new legislation. It was also agreed to brief the June Stakeholder Forum meeting on include the Commission's approach to taking forward the Charities Bill.

An offer from HMRC to present to the Board was agreed and ongoing litigation including an appeal to the Charity Tribunal was outlined.

Leanne McCullough left the meeting at 10.05am

The Board discussed a matter in camera.

Leanne McCullough rejoined the meeting at 10.20am

An update was provided on the overall position regarding claims relating to victims of historical institutional abuse.

Patricia Kelly left the meeting at 10.30am

An update was provided to the Board on the outcome of a recent Schedule 1 decision.

Patricia Kelly rejoined the meeting at 10.35am

AP2: Chair to write to the Minister regarding resourcing to support introduction and long-term deliver of new legislation.

AP3: Details of the Commission's approach and options for implementing the Charities Bill to be raised at the June Stakeholder Forum.

5. Policies and Processes

a. Annual Report Text

The Head of Corporate Services introduced the draft text, and the Board commended staff on the large amount of work achieved during 2025/26 as reflected in the report. A number of queries were addressed and following a suggestion the Board agreed to develop the approach to performance reporting in Section 2. The overall draft report was accepted, subject to amendment, for submission to external audit as proposed by Aoife Hamilton

and seconded by Patricia Kelly. A final draft will come to the June Board meeting.

AP 4: Amended draft 2025/26 annual report text to be submitted to audit.

AP 5: Finalised annual report and accounts to be included in June Board agenda.

b. 2026-29 Comms & Engagement strategy and progress report

The Head of Corporate Services introduced the integrated communications and engagement strategy highlighting the lack of any dedicated resource budget at this time. Queries were addressed and a number of additions were noted. The Board agreed to consider an updated draft and annual action plans at the June meeting as proposed by Patricia Kelly and seconded by Alan Hunter.

AP6: Finalised Comms & Engagement strategy and action plans to be brought to June Board meeting.

c. Enquiries options paper

The Head of Compliance and Enquiries introduced the paper noting the nature of Serious Incident Reports (SIRs) and Matters of Material Significance (MOMs). Following a query the historic outcomes were noted and Commissioners discussed legal advice on a revised approach. After considering the risks and benefits, the Board adopted the revised approach to managing SIRs and MoMs as proposed by Hugh McKeag and seconded by Leanne McCullough.

AP7: Revised approach to managing with SIRs and MOMS to be implemented going forward.

d. Jurisdiction process for threshold

The Head of Charity Services introduced the paper and outlined the context in which a jurisdiction issue would arise in the context of operating a registration threshold. The Board noted the proposed assessment process, which would apply across a range of regulatory manuals, would allow staff to determine if the Commission had jurisdiction over an organisation. Following discussion and subject to minor amendment, the Board approved the jurisdiction assessment step out process and inclusion in relevant manuals, as proposed by Aoife Hamilton and seconded by Alan Hunter.

AP8: Amended jurisdiction step out process to be implemented in relevant manuals.

e. 2026-29 ICT Strategy & progress report

The Head of Corporate Services introduced the progress report and new Information & Communications Technology (ICT) strategy developed by the Commission's ICT Strategy Board. Following discussion, the Board approved the new ICT strategy subject to minor amendments, as proposed by Hugh McKeag and seconded by Kieran Donaghy.

f. Board effectiveness action plan

The Chief Executive introduced the action plan which was noted by the Board.

g. Policy Development Plan & progress report

The Head of Charity Services introduced the report on policy and guidance development in the previous year and priorities for 2026-27. Following a number of queries the Board welcomed the report and discussed potential updating of charity reserves guidance.

h. Stakeholder Forum update

The Deputy Chief Commissioner gave an update on the previous forum meeting on 11 February 2026 and outlined details of the next meeting on 9 June 2026.

6. Reports from Committees

The Finance & Admin Manager joined the meeting at 12pm.

ARAC

a. Minutes of ARAC Meeting No 69 – 5 May 2026

The minutes of the ARAC meeting held on 5 May 2026 were approved for publication, as proposed by Gerard McCurdy and seconded by Leanne McCullough.

AP9: Minutes of ARAC No 69 – 5 May 2026 to be published on the website.

b. Draft Accounts 2025/26

The Chair of the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) welcomed Nicola Fisher, Finance and Admin Manager, to the meeting and outlined the committee's consideration of the draft accounts. Several queries were addressed, and the Board thanked the Finance and Admin Manager and staff for their work on preparing the draft accounts which were agreed for submission to external audit, as proposed by Hugh McKeag and seconded by Leanne McCullough.

The Finance and Admin Manager introduced the draft 2025/26 Remuneration Report which the Board agreed for submission to external audit at this time as proposed by Hugh McKeag and seconded by Kieran Donaghy.

AP10: Draft 2025/26 Accounts and the Remuneration Report to be submitted to external audit.

c. Draft Governance Statement

The Chief Executive introduced the draft 2025/26 Governance Statement which reflected feedback from the ARAC and the draft governance statement was agreed for submission to external audit as proposed by Hugh McKeag and seconded by Leanne McCullough.

AP11: Draft 2025/26 governance statement to be submitted to external audit.

d. Corporate Risk Register

The Chair of ARAC outlined ARAC's recent discussion of the draft register which detailed risks to delivery of the 2026/27 business plan. Following discussion, it was agreed to increasing risk three - failure or unavailability of key digital systems and adopt the register as proposed by Hugh McKeag and seconded by Alan Hunter.

e. ARAC Annual Report

The Chair of ARAC introduced the committee's annual report for 2025/26 and thanked staff for their assistance in its preparation. The Board noted the committee's assessment and assurance on governance of the organisation during the past year.

f. Internal Audit second assignment 2025-26

The Chair of ARAC introduced the second assignment report, which included a satisfactory rating with one priority two recommendation.

g. Internal Audit Annual Report & Opinion 2025/26

The Chair of ARAC introduced the report noting the overall satisfactory assurance for the year with only minor recommendations.

The Finance & Admin Manager left the meeting at 12.15pm.

Schedule 1 Decisions

h. Three Commissioners Committee

- 12 December 2025 - noted
- 23 January 2026 - noted
- 20 February 2026 - AM - noted
- 20 February 2026 - PM - noted
- 20 March 2026 - AM - noted
- 20 March 2026 - PM - noted

7. Corporate Services Report

The Head of Corporate Services introduced their report and highlighted progress on the office relocation project and initial resource budget shortfall. Following discussion of budget constraint and deep concern at the risk to the organisation this created, it was deemed a necessity and the Board agreed to leave a legal post in the permanent structure vacant to try to balance the budget, as proposed by Hugh McKeag and Kieran Donaghy. Progress on a range of performance indicators and projects was welcomed.

8. Charity Services Report

The Head of Charity Services introduced their report highlighting various casework progress, trends and details of high-profile cases which the Board noted. Overall progress at this time on the threshold project was noted.

9. Compliance and Enquiries Report

The Head of Compliance and Enquiries introduced their report and gave an update on filing compliance rates, highlighted the focus this year on filing defaulters and outlined current high-profile concerns. Information on the

Financial Action Task Force (FATF) was provided and staff involvement in preparations for the UK's next major evaluation scheduled for 2027 were noted.

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 22 June 2026:

- Final 2025/26 Annual report and accounts
- Incorporations manual
- Integrated Communications and Engagement strategy and annual plans
- Annual progress report to ECNI
- Legal update
- Annual review of BOF and Code of Conduct, Standing Orders
- CEx performance objectives

11. AOB

None

Meeting ended at 12.30pm

Register of Outstanding Action Points

Board Meeting and Action Point Number	Date Raised	Agenda Item	Action	Owners	Status (target)
126(1)	11/05/2026	1	Minutes of Board Meeting No 125, 23 March 2026 to be published on CCNI website.	Comms	Complete
126(2)	11/05/2026	4	Chair to write to the Minister regarding resourcing to support introduction and long-term deliver of new legislation.	Chair	Complete
126(3)	11/05/2026	4	Details of the Commissions approach and options for implementing the Charities Bill to be raised at the June Stakeholder Forum.	Deputy Chair	Complete
126(4)	11/05/2026	5a	Amended draft 2025/26 annual report text to be submitted to audit.	HCorpS	Complete
126(5)	11/05/2026	5a	Finalised annual report and accounts to be included in June Board agenda.	HCorpS	Complete
126(6)	11/05/2026	5b	Finalised Comms & Engagement strategy and action plans to be brought to June Board meeting.	HCS	Complete
126(7)	11/05/2026	5c	Revised approach to managing with SIRs and MOMS to be implemented going forward.	HC&ES	Ongoing (Q2 26/27)
126(8)	11/05/2026	5d	Amended jurisdiction step out process to be implemented in relevant manuals.	HCS	Ongoing (Q2 26/27)
126(9)	11/05/2026	6a	Minutes of ARAC No 69 – 5 May 2026 to be published on the website.	Comms	Complete

126(10)	11/05/2026	6b	Draft 2025/26 Accounts and the Remuneration Report to be submitted to external audit.	HCorpS	Complete
126(11)	11/05/2026	6c	Draft 2025/26 governance statement to be submitted to external audit.	CEx	Complete
125(4)	23/03/2026	5a	Further appointment decision to be considered at next Board meeting.	HCS	Complete
125(5)	23/03/2026	5b	Updated LAG committee terms of reference to be published.	HCS	Complete
125(8)	23/03/2026	5g	Discussion on recovery of costs to be held at next Board meeting	HCS	Complete
125(9)	23/03/2026	5h	Arrangements to be made for a Board 'Away day' in Quarter 2.	FAO	Ongoing (Q1 26/27)
125(16)	23/03/2026	7	Agreement to lease and lease agreement to be approved by correspondence and signed by the Chief Executive.	HCorpS	Ongoing (Q1 26/27)
125(18)	23/03/2026	8	Section 37 publications approach to be implemented.	HCS	Ongoing (Q2 26/27)
125(19)	23/03/2026	8	Updated Closures Manual to be implemented.	HCS	Ongoing (Q2 26/27)
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)
122(8)	10/11/2025	5b	Further enhancement of guidance to be discussed with representative groups.	Policy Manager	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	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 (26/27)