

## Northern Ireland Environment Link

### Director / Trustees' Report for the year ended 31st March 2024

The Board of Directors/Trustees submits its report together with the audited financial statements of the company for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.

#### REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Northern Ireland Environment Link is a private company limited by guarantee without a share capital, exempt from using the word "limited". The Company's registration number NI034988. The company is also a charity registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland, number NIC101074. The present Directors, and any past Directors who served during the year, are given on the company information page of these financial statements, together with the names of the charity's external advisors.

#### STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

##### *General*

Northern Ireland Environment Link is governed by its Articles of Association originally adopted on 13th October 1998 and revised on 17th September 2014. In the event of the company being wound up, members are required to contribute an amount not exceeding £1.

##### *Directors/Trustees*

The Board of Directors/Trustees is responsible for the overall governance of the Company. Director/Trustees are appointed by the full members at Annual General Meeting. The total number of director/trustees shall not be more than 16 and not be less than 8. New Director/Trustees are provided with training in regard to their statutory responsibilities.

The Board delegates the exercise of certain powers in connection with the management and administration of the Company to the Executive. This is controlled by regular reporting back to the Board, so that all decisions made under delegated powers can be ratified by the full Board in due course.

The Chief Executive is responsible for the day-to-day management of the company's affairs. The Chief Executive is assisted by Project Managers.

##### *Statement of Directors'/Trustees' Responsibilities and Corporate Governance*

The Directors/Trustees are responsible for ensuring that the Company keeps proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the company and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the Company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities and to provide reasonable assurance that:

- The Company is operating efficiently and effectively;
- All assets are safeguarded against unauthorised use or disposition and are properly applied;
- Proper records are maintained and financial information used within the Company, or for publication, is reliable; *and*
- The Company complies with relevant laws and regulations.

##### *Statement as disclosure to our auditors*

In so far as the directors/trustees are aware at the time of approving our trustees' annual report:

- there is no relevant information, being information needed by the auditor in connection with preparing their report, of which the charity's auditor is unaware; *and*
- the directors/trustees, having made enquiries of fellow directors/trustees and the charity's auditor that they ought to have individually taken, have each taken all steps that he/she is obliged to take as a director/trustee in order to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the auditor is aware of that information.

##### *Internal controls*

Internal controls over all forms of commitment and expenditure continue to be reviewed to improve efficiency.

Processes are in place to ensure that performance is monitored and the appropriate management information is prepared and reviewed on an ongoing basis by executive management and quarterly by the Board of Directors.

The systems of internal control are designed to provide reasonable but not absolute assurances against material misstatement or loss. They include:

- a strategic plan and annual budget approved by the Directors;
- regular consideration by the Directors of financial results, variances from budget, non financial performance indicators and bench marking reviews;
- delegation of day to day management authority and segregation of duties;
- identification and management of risks.

### **Risk Statement**

An internal risk assessment has been undertaken in order to identify the major risks to which the organisation is exposed. These have been identified as:-

- Financial - the organisation's funding is uncertain and historic income streams may be at risk. To mitigate against this the Board has formulated a Reserves Policy (see Finance Review below)
- Operational - as an organiser of a wide variety of events and programmes, the organisation takes great care to ensure the safety of all participants and that the appropriate liability policies are in place.
- Operational - failure to meet targets and objectives specified by our Sponsors and funders.

The Board recognises its responsibility for the management of risk and has in place a Risk Strategy, which categorises risk in terms of severity, likelihood and consequence. The Strategy is reviewed annually and risk is monitored regularly.

### **Risk Management**

During the year the Directors have considered and examined the major risks that face the charity and established strategies that will mitigate the impact they may have on the charity's future. This process will be continued on an ongoing basis for each financial year.

### **OBJECTS, OBJECTIVES AND PRINCIPAL ACTIVITIES OF THE CHARITY**

The Charity's objectives are to:

- Advance and promote for the public benefit environmental conservation, protection, improvement and sustainability in Northern Ireland;
- Raise awareness of the importance of environmental issues by providing a forum for the exchange of ideas and promoting a collective voice on environmental matters;
- Advance the education of all sections of the public in environmental and ecological sciences.

### **STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE WITH THE DUTY TO HAVE REGARD TO THE CHARITY COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND'S GUIDANCE ON PUBLIC BENEFIT**

In setting our objectives and planning our activities for the year the trustees have given careful consideration to the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland's guidance on public benefit to ensure that the activities have helped to achieve the Charity's purpose and provide a benefit to the beneficiaries. No harm and no private benefit flowed from the purposes of the charity.

### **FINANCIAL REVIEW AND RESULTS FOR THE YEAR**

The Statement of Financial Activities on page 6 is designed to reflect all incoming resources receivable and expenditure incurred during the year irrespective of when income is actually received and payments made. Total incoming resources for the year amounted to £818,774 (2023: £894,718) of which £228,728 (2023: £156,065) is the core grant from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA). Total resources expended of £730,366 (2023: £810,309) resulted in a net surplus for the year of £88,408 (2023: £84,409). There is a balance of £10 (2023: negative £5,997) on restricted funds at the year end and the balance on unrestricted funds at the year-end was £546,705 (2023: £464,304) which is free and represents the reserves available to the Directors to help fulfil current and future plans.

### **RESERVES POLICY**

The Directors/Trustees believe that the Company should hold financial reserves because:

- NIEL is reliant upon government funding, and particularly on funding from one Agency within government
- The current funding situation is uncertain; central government funding is being reduced in Northern Ireland, and it is likely that NGOs across NI will be adversely affected in the coming years
- To assist with cashflow
- Evidence of a reasonable level of reserve will : provide confidence to funders and other potential partners; demonstrates NIEL's sustainability and capacity to manage unforeseen financial difficulty; assist in the long-term strategic planning of the organisation

The Board of Trustees have agreed that NIEL should aim to have a reserve of between 3-12 months operating costs plus wind-up costs. Reserves should be built up and maintained at the desired level in stages consistent with the charity's overall financial position and its need to maintain and develop its charitable activities.

Based on a 6-month operating cost (unrestricted fund only) of £360,000 and current wind-up costs in the region of £100,000, this makes a target reserve of between £280,000 and £460,000. However due to the Coronavirus pandemic, and the resulting long-term uncertainty, the Board consider it prudent to hold a higher level of reserves, if this can be achieved, until further notice.

Details of the Company's funds are shown in Note 12. An analysis of the Company's net assets between the funds is given in Note 13. The Directors/Trustees consider that sufficient resources are held in an appropriate form to enable each fund to be applied in accordance with any restriction imposed.

## **EMPLOYEES**

The Company aims to be an organisation that employees enjoy working for and where they feel supported and developed. Employees are kept fully informed about its strategy and objectives, as well as day to day news and events. Regular information about the organisation is available through meetings and e-mails. All employees are encouraged to give their views and suggestions on performance and strategy. The Company supports equal opportunity.

## **PLANS FOR FUTURE PERIODS**

The company plans continuing the current activities in the forthcoming years subject to satisfactory funding arrangements.

## **AUDITORS**

Diamond & Skillen were appointed auditors to the company and are deemed to be re-appointed in accordance with Section 487(2) of the Companies Act 2006.

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies' regime (S.419(2) of the Companies Act 2006).

This report was approved by the board of directors on 5th December 2024 and signed on its behalf by:



**Stephen Aston**

Chair - Board of Directors / Trustees