

COMPANY REGISTRATION NUMBER: NI 060144
CHARITY REGISTRATION NUMBER: 104019

**The International Centre for Local and Regional
Development**

Company Limited by Guarantee

Financial Statements

31 July 2022

Finegan Gibson Ltd
Chartered accountants & statutory auditor
Causeway Tower
9 James Street South
Belfast
BT2 8DN

The International Centre for Local and Regional Development

Company Limited by Guarantee

Financial Statements

Year ended 31 July 2022

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The International Centre for Local and Regional Development

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Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report)

Year ended 31 July 2022

The trustees, who are also the directors for the purposes of company law, present their report and the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 July 2022.

Reference and administrative details

Registered charity name	The International Centre for Local and Regional Development
Charity registration number	104019
Company registration number	NI 060144
Principal office and registered office	Belfast School of Architecture & Built Environment Ulster University Jordanstown Campus Newtownabbey BT37 0QB Antrim

The trustees

Ms J Pyper	(Resigned 15 July 2022)
Mr D McSorley	(Resigned 24 February 2023)
Prof G Knapp	
Ms M MacIntyre	
Prof L Maguire	
Prof B Donnellan	
Mr P Maguire	
Ms F McCandless	(Appointed 7 March 2023)

Company secretary Ms Caroline Creamer

Auditor Finegan Gibson Ltd
Chartered accountants & statutory auditor
Causeway Tower
9 James Street South
Belfast
BT2 8DN

Bankers Bank of Ireland
1 Donegall Square South
Belfast
BT1 5LR

Solicitors Elliot Duffy Garrett
Royston House
34 Upper Queen Street
Belfast
BT1 6FD

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Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

Year ended 31 July 2022

Structure, governance and management

Status and Administration

The International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD) is an incorporated charity which was incorporated on the 11 July 2006. Details of the registered office, Executive Committee members and advisers and other relevant information are given on page 1.

The International Centre for Local and Regional Development is a company limited by guarantee and is governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association. The company officially registered with The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland in November 2017 – Northern Ireland Charity Number NIC104019.

Organisation

The ICLRD is a North-South-US partnership established in 2006 to explore and expand the contribution that planning and the development of physical, social and economic infrastructures can make to improve the lives of people on the island of Ireland and elsewhere. The partner institutions include: the Maynooth University Social Sciences Institute (incorporating the National Institute for Regional and Spatial Analysis (NIRSA)) at Maynooth University; the Belfast School of Architecture and the Built Environment at Ulster University; and the National Centre for Smart Growth Research and Education, University of Maryland.

Each of the current partners brings together complementary expertise and networks on both a North-South and East-West basis - creating a unique, all-island and international centre. The ICLRD continues to expand its collaboration with other institutions and has established working relationships with individual faculty and researchers from universities and research institutions including: Mary Immaculate College-University of Limerick, University College Dublin, and the University of Manchester. The ICLRD is very open to involving other academics and research institutions in its activities. The ICLRD continues to work closely with other organisations involved in cross-border research and activities including the local authority-led cross-border networks.

The current Executive Committee Members are fully briefed on the ICLRD's mission and activities and, on joining the Committee were advised of their legal responsibilities as outlined in the current Articles and Memorandum of Association (including requirements in regard to the code of conduct and conflict of interest).

The Executive Committee Members have ultimate legal and financial responsibility for the affairs of the ICLRD, although the management of the organisation is generally delegated to the staff, through the Executive Officer. Since May 2014, this responsibility lies with the Director, Caroline Creamer. The Executive Committee meets on a quarterly basis - or more frequently as and when required.

The Executive Committee Members are accountable for the activities of the ICLRD. They provide direction and leadership, oversee the ICLRD's finances, and approve projects. The Executive Officer coordinates these activities.

The number of Executive Committee Members currently on the Board of ICLRD is 7, but the Board may from time to time register an increase or decrease in Executive Members.

The current 7 Executive Committee Members include an independent chair, three independent Non-Executive Directors, and representatives appointed/nominated by each of the institutions that are 'core partners' of the ICLRD and who are also subscribers to the Memorandum of Association:

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- (a) Maynooth University;
- (b) Ulster University; and
- (c) University of Maryland.

The post of Vice-Chair is currently vacant, with the Board deciding in 2022 not to fill this position. Rather, where the Chair is unable to attend a Board meeting, the Trustee from the host institute will stand in as 'Acting Chair'.

Additional Non-Executive Committee Members from private and non-profit bodies, with an interest in the ICLRD's activities, may be invited to join the Board in the future. The Executive Committee Members may, from time to time and at any resolution of the Board at their absolute discretion, make such regulations as they see fit relating to the Executive Committee Membership of the ICLRD. Committee Members may also, from time to time and at any time by like resolution at their discretion, alter such regulations to such an extent and in such manner as the Executive Committee Members shall see fit.

The Executive Board is supported in its activities by an Independent Advisory Board. The Advisory Board will provide a link with institutions and individuals in the academic world, government, non-governmental organisations and the private sector on both sides of the Atlantic. In 2019, discussions commenced at Executive Board level on re-defining the function of the Advisory Board to ensure it better met the needs of the Board and Director in guiding and informing the Centre's future direction. New Terms of Reference were devised, and invitations were issued to potential new membership from the island of Ireland, U.K. and U.S. (identified because of their expertise in a range of spatial planning domains). The inaugural meeting of the newly constituted Board, which will be co-chaired by Mr. Pádraig Maguire, Senior Planner, Meath County Council (member of the Executive Board) and Prof. Peter Roberts, Chairperson of Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE), took place on 2nd September 2021.

Further meetings have been held on

- 14th September 2022;
- 4th May 2022;
- 1st February 2022.

In July 2017, the inaugural meeting of the ICLRD Research Forum was held in Belfast. This Forum was independently chaired by Prof. Deborah Peel, Emeritus Professor, University of Dundee until July 2020. The purpose of this Forum is to provide the research network with a structure through which they can inform future work programmes and funding applications, while also creating a space in which they can identify common interests and opportunities for organising shared events and jointly penning research articles. In November 2022, Prof. Diana Fitzsimons was appointed as Independent Chair and the Research Forum met on-line, for the first time since COVID pandemic, on 9th February 2023.

To strengthen the relationship between the three operational levels of the ICLRD - namely, Executive Board, Advisory Forum and Research Forum - the Executive Board has sanctioned that:

- The Chair of the Research Forum will hold a seat on the Advisory Forum;
- A Co-Chair of the Advisory Board (where not already an Executive Board member) will attend the Executive Board meetings in an 'observer' capacity.

In support of the day-to-day operations of the programme, the following procedures/manuals were put in place and/or updated during this financial year:

- ICLRD Financial Administration and Management (updated February 2023);
 - ICLRD Fraud Policy (approved January 2019, and reviewed annually);
 - ICLRD GDPR and Privacy Statement (approved August 2019, and reviewed annually);
 - ICLRD Risk Register (standing item); and
 - ICLRD Register of Interests (standing item – with annual review every August; thus aligning with
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Year ended 31 July 2022

ICLRD's financial year).

During the course of this financial year, the Executive Board met on five occasions:

- 22 June 2022;
- 13 April 2022 (also the AGM);
- 16 February 2022;
- 10 November 2021; and
- 8 September 2021.

Objectives and activities

Objectives

The ICLRD has a specific role to play in contributing to the social, economic and territorial cohesion of the island of Ireland through:

- Addressing information gaps and providing new insights through independent joined-up research and policy advice on cross-border and all-island spatial planning and local and regional development issues (e.g. governance and cross-border collaborations, community development, economic development, tourism, renewables and the green economy, the environment, service provision, etc.);
- Improving the capacity of communities and local, regional and national government representatives and officials to engage in mutually beneficial cross-border cooperation through capacity building/animation programmes;
- Assisting local governments and communities in translating policy into 'on the ground' action;
- Acting as a catalyst and conduit to bring relevant public and private actors, North and South, together to work on common goals; and
- Promoting international cooperation and exchanges.

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Year ended 31 July 2022

Objectives and activities *(continued)*

Mission Statement - Public benefit

The public benefit of the ICLRD is in the advancement of practical cooperation and mutual understanding between both jurisdictions on the island of Ireland by bridging the policy-practitioner divide and pursuing increased cooperation and capacity among regional and local authorities in spatial planning, economic development, regeneration and conflict resolution and reconciliation on the island of Ireland. This is achieved through the advancement of education via action research, the provision of training, capacity-building and animation programmes, and the holding of consultation events on emerging policies and directives.

The ICLRD researches and promotes cooperation in the areas of spatial planning, regional development, government and governance, sustainable development, community development, professional education, climate change, environmental management and protection.

The ICLRD is focused on building the capacity of regional and local authorities to manage spatial planning on the island of Ireland as a whole. The ICLRD provides independent, joined-up research and policy advice on cross-border and all-island spatial planning and local and regional development. The Centre plays a proactive role in peace and reconciliation on the island by bringing together policy-makers, practitioners and academics, North and South, to work on common goals in the areas of coordinated spatial planning and social and economic development at local, regional and national levels. It does this through research, policy advice and publications; professional education and capacity building programmes that assist local governments and communities to translate policy into 'on the ground' action; and active outreach and networking that includes conferences, workshops and international cooperation and exchanges to identify best practices.

Stimulating economic growth and improving the living conditions to alleviate and prevent social conflict is at the heart of the Centre's mission. The ICLRD is focused on building the capacity of regional and local authorities, development agencies, cross-border networks and community and voluntary organisations to identify strategic areas of cooperation.

Through its research and professional education programmes, the ICLRD works with policy-makers and local leaders to improve the environments in which people in Ireland, North and South, live and work, with particular emphasis on the needs of marginalised and divided communities. It combines the promotion of regional planning and development as a tool for competitiveness with local planning and development as a way to remedy the continuing problems of social disadvantage.

The ICLRD brings together an interdisciplinary partnership of academics, practitioners and senior policy-makers in the areas of regional and community planning, cross-border cooperation, governance, community and economic development and mapping analysis. It draws upon the expertise of Maynooth University, Ulster University, and the University of Maryland to tackle the challenges facing Ireland, North and South. It provides a model for others to follow: a prestigious cross-jurisdictional research and development Centre that draws upon the intellectual capital of third-level institutions and research centres at home and abroad to deal with key social, economic and environmental issues facing the island of Ireland - and countries in Europe and further afield that want to learn from Ireland.

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Objectives and activities *(continued)*

Target

Each year the ICLRD seeks to undertake action research that contributes to the advancement of education by fostering and building an understanding of the complex all-island and cross-border dynamics and drivers of change in cross-jurisdiction cities, towns and rural areas. Our conferences, technical workshops and participation in networks provide policy and operational linkages between central and local policy-makers and among officials and practitioners. Finally, our executive training programmes help local officials acquire the skills and the cutting-edge tools for effective planning and management in a challenging context. Since its inception, the ICLRD has organised its work around three spatial scales: EU and all-island; sub-regional which includes cross-border; and local.

Through its activities the ICLRD is facilitating forums to foster the exchange of experience and best practices. It is also supporting joint North-South cooperation in inter-regional, including cross-border, initiatives along the lines encouraged by the EU and its structural funds.

Principal activities

The ICLRD uses a variety of strategies to undertake its work, including:

- Engaging in action research with local governments, communities and central agencies that contributes to the practical understanding of the complex inter-jurisdictional and cross-border dynamics and drivers of change;
- Undertaking case study research to evaluate and develop good practice models;
- Publishing identified good practices and strategic policy advice;
- Hosting workshops and fora on key themes, as well as the development and delivery of training modules;
- Acting as a catalyst and facilitating community groups and local governments in the identification and roll-out of local development initiatives; and
- Providing sustained strategic cooperation, rather than 'one-off' projects, among academic institutions, the private sector and public authorities.

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Achievements and performance

The ICLRD partners worked on the following major projects in the period of this audit:

Applied Research Activities

During this audit period, the vast majority of the Centre's work programme was dedicated to technical assistance projects (as outlined below). In terms of research activities, the ICLRD continued to actively promote the Centre's research findings at every available opportunity and source new funded programmes of activity.

One such significant applied-research commission undertaken during this reporting period was as follows:

InPLACE: The Changing Spatial Relationship between Home and Workplace

In early January 2019, the ICLRD were contacted by a GP in Wicklow airing concerns around the impact of commuting on his patients, their families and the community at large. Following a number of follow-on conversations, a draft proposal was developed over 2019, and in early 2020 was further amended and revised to take account of the disruptions to commuting patterns resulting from COVID-19, and the potential longer-term impacts of this for commuting trends and office working. In February 2020, the ICLRD took the proposal to the Office of the Planning Regulator for review and invited them to be a partner. In July 2020, the OPR confirmed that with further amendments to the proposal they would become a partner to this proposed 24-month research programme and commit financial resources to the delivery of the programme. Through the National Planning Knowledge Group, contact was made with a number of other potential funders which in turn led to the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA), the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and Clare County Council agreeing to be funding partners. By end 2021, the Department for infrastructure NI also came on board as a partner, supporting two case studies in Northern Ireland. With monies secured, Phase 1 of InPLACE launched in April 2021. Taking a case study approach, this initial phase will focus on three towns:

- Ennistymon-Lahinch, Co. Clare (as a low commuting/control town)
- Newtownmountkennedy, Co. Wicklow
- Dundrum, Co. Down.

This Phase was to be rolled out over 12 months (April 2021-March 2022); and was to include the selection of four further towns for investigation during Phase 2. However, due to COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions on travel and numbers meeting, and also taking account of community wishes around when fieldwork takes place, the roll-out of Phase 1 was delayed. As a result, Phase 1 did not conclude until September 2022. This led to a delay in the start of Phase 2 - and will likely lead to a no-cost delay to the conclusion of the project. While the Interim Report for Phase 1 was being developed over the Summer, the research team worked closely with the LGMA to identify case study areas for Phase 2.

The study now includes a US dimension; with the University of Maryland securing funding from the Maryland Department of Transportation to replicate the study in two U.S. towns with less than 5,000 residents each and high levels of long distance (45+ minute) commuting. These were:

- Middletown in Frederick County, and
- North Beach in Calvert County.

The research team draws on ICLRD colleagues from Maynooth University, Ulster University,

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University College Dublin, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick and University of Maryland. In terms of project governance, the work programme is overseen by:

- Operational Partnership Group - involving the research team and funding agencies;
- Research Advisory Group - involving representatives from Translink, QUB, Grow Remote, Rural Residents Network/Rural Community Network, Wexford Development Partnership and Western Development Commission.

It is the objective of this research programme that it will provide policy and practice recommendations to support the role of local government, among others, in place-shaping, place-making and promoting resilient places in a post-COVID world.

The Advancement of Education: Presenting Research Findings and Networking

As opportunities arise, the ICLRD hosts its own events and encourages the ICLRD partners and affiliates to present at conferences and contribute to articles. The ICLRD website also hosts a briefing paper series. The ICLRD sponsored Journal - *Borderlands: The Journal for Spatial Planning in Ireland* - offers an opportunity to publish articles on emerging topics in spatial planning and local and regional development that are relevant to cross-border cooperation.

Conferences, Seminars & Workshops

As well as organising and hosting conferences and seminars, the ICLRD was also invited to make presentations at a number of national events in 2021 and 2022. These included:

- Keynote address by ICLRD Director at the CES Implementation Network of Ireland and Northern Ireland - based on NESC research report, *Long-term Resilient and Sustainable Cities A Scoping Paper* – on 11th November 2021. This webinar focusing on implementing resilient and sustainable places and the importance of adopting a place-based approach.
- Presentation by ICLRD Director to the 'Talking Towns' seminar series hosted by the UCD Centre for Irish Towns – focused on *The Border and Irish Towns* – on 3rd March 2022.
- Conference session dedicated to the InPLACE project as part of the Conference for Irish Geographers (CIG) held in University of Limerick from 18-20 May 2022. Session took place on 20th May, with presentations from Dr. Karen Keaveney, Dr. Gavan Rafferty and Prof. Des McCafferty.
- Presentation to 'Rural Voices' webinar series on the InPLACE research programme. This was co-delivered by Ms. Caroline Creamer and Dr. Karen Keaveney on 25th May 2022. Recording available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VWjBFrokoSw>

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ICLRD Webinar Series 2022

As with 2021, and again in direct response to COVID-19, and on-going restrictions in gatherings, the annual conference was substituted with a series of webinars which took place in Qtr.2 and Qtr.3 2022. The overall theme of the series was 'Post-Pandemic Planning' and included five events. The series ran from May - November 2022; with each event lasting 75minutes. The programme was as follows:

Date	Theme	LEAD
18 th May	Where Land Meets Sea: Planning Challenges and Opportunities at the Coast Recording and copy of presentations at: https://iclrld.org/2022/05/06/where-land-meets-sea-planning-challenges-and-opportunities-at-the-coast/	Dr. Cormac Walsh & Dr. Heather Ritchie (UU)
15 th June	Thriving Places Post-Pandemic: The Relationship between Spatial Planning, Health and Wellbeing Recording and copy of presentations at: https://iclrld.org/2022/08/04/thriving-places-post-pandemic-the-relationship-between-spatial-planning-health-and-wellbeing/	Ms. Caroline Creamer, MU/ICLRD
21 st September	Societal Resilience as a Strategic Local Capability Recording and copy of presentations at: https://iclrld.org/2022/09/21/societal-resilience-as-a-strategic-local-capability-how-do-we-build-it/	Dr. Andrew McClelland, University of Manchester
19 th October	Commuting, People and Place: Emerging Perspectives from the InPLACE Project Recording and copy of presentations at: https://iclrld.org/2022/10/19/commuting-people-and-place-emerging-perspectives-from-the-inplace-project/	Prof. Gerrit Knaap, University of Maryland
16 th November	Commuting, People and Place: Critical Reflections from Practice and Implications for Policy Recording and copy of presentations at: https://iclrld.org/2022/11/17/commuting-people-and-place-critical-reflections-from-practice-and-implications-for-policy/	Dr. Bernie O'Donoghue-Hynes, Local Government Management Agency (InPLACE Partnership Board)

These events continue to introduce ICLR D to a new audience of academics, policy-makers and practitioners.

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Briefing Paper Series

No papers were added to the ICLRD Briefing Paper Series during this financial year:

Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR): National Planning Knowledge Group

Established in early 2019, the Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) in Ireland convened a meeting of all planning schools across Higher Education on the island of Ireland on 12th May 2019. As a cross-border research centre with a strong profile in spatial planning matters, the ICLRD were invited to this meeting. In late 2019, the OPR established the National Planning Knowledge Group (NPKG). The ICLRD remains involved; with the Director attending meetings (with substitution provided by Board members where required). During this financial year, three meetings of the NPKG took place (all on-line in response to COVID-19 and public health guidelines):

- 6 October 2021;
- 2 February 2022; and
- 4 May 2022.

The Office of the Planning Regulator is a funder of the InPLACE project. An update on project activity was provided at each of these meetings.

Department of Rural and Community Development - Higher Education Institutions and Research Network

In October 2021, the ICLRD Director was nominated by Maynooth University to sit on the newly established Higher Education Institutions and Research Network as part of the role-out and policy support of the Irish Government's rural strategy, Our Rural Future. During this financial year, the Network met on the following dates:

- 6 October 2022
- 7 April 2022
- 5 October 2021

Engagement with Government

Since its launch in October 2020, representatives of ICLRD have been engaging with the Shared Island Dialogue series. Events attended include:

- 1 October 2022: The Future of Education on a Shared Island
- 20 January 2022: Tourism on the Shared Island - Building on Past Success to Create a Sustainable Future
- 20 May 2022: Enabling Rural and Community Development on a Shared Island.

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Ad-Hoc Group for North-South and East-West Co-operation

In June 2020, ICLRD was invited to join a 'loose' grouping of North-South / all-island bodies who have begun to meet regularly on Brexit and its implications for ongoing cooperation. The Group is being chaired by the Centre for Cross Border Studies (CCBS). The over-arching objective of the Ad-Hoc Group for North-South and East-West Cooperation is to secure the continued means to cooperate within and between these islands. Through engagement with key Government Departments and Task forces, it aims to ensure that agreements, policies or legislation developed or enacted by relevant regional/devolved and national governments and/or the European Union are conducive of the maintenance of the conditions necessary for cooperation - North/South and East/West. An immediate priority for the Ad-Hoc Group has been to seek engagement with decision-makers involved in the implementation of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland.

As an ad-hoc group, members are free to engage when/where they feel it is relevant and take a back seat on other occasions. There are approx. 20 organisations involved at present - from Rural Community Network, Northern Ireland's Womens Network, ICTU, Northern Ireland Environmental Link, Creative Spark, Irish Rural Link, and Co-operation Ireland.

Networks

The ICLRD continues to expand its collaboration with other universities, research institutions and researchers from higher education bodies such as Mary Immaculate College-University of Limerick, University College Dublin, and University of Manchester. We also expanded our joint initiatives with other organisations involved in cross-border research and activities including Co-operation Ireland. The ICLRD also continues to engage with the Europe-wide OLA (Observatory on Local Autonomy) Network; with both Ms. Caroline Creamer, Director, ICLRD (and Maynooth University) and Dr. Brendan O'Keeffe, Senior Research Associate, ICLRD acting as joint Irish contact points. In November 2015, Ms. Creamer was appointed Irish Contact Point for the EU-Funded ESPON 2020 Programme, and continues this role for the ESPON 2030 Programme. This programme relates quite closely to the work programme of the ICLRD; with a core aim of ESPON 2030 being to promote and foster a European territorial dimension in regional and local development and cooperation by providing evidence, knowledge generation and transfer and policy learning to public authorities and other policy actors at all levels.

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External Engagement

Over this financial year, the ICLR D has been holding briefing sessions with a range of agencies/ Government Departments to outline the work of ICLR D and its role in building policy-praxis divides across the island of Ireland. Engagements held include:

- 17 May 2022 - Universite de Limoges on European Research Alliances
- 5 May 2022 - Shared Island Unit
- 8 November 2021 - SEUPB on Smart Towns and Villages theme of PEACE PLUS.

The ICLR D was also invited to engage in a number of workshops on themes highly relevant to spatial planning and regional development policy across the island of Ireland. These included:

- 23 June 2022: Ulster University workshop on 'Transboundary Marine Spatial Planning'
- 7 March 2022: Urban Foresight workshop (on behalf of SEUPB) on Smart Towns and Villages
- 4 March 2022: ESPON Workshop on International Relations in Europe - with focus on the impact of Brexit on the Irish border region
- 14 January 2022: ESPON-Southern Regional Assembly - ESPON TOURISM on Demand Workshop in Inveragh Peninsula on Tourism Carrying Capacity
- 26 November 2021: Maynooth University-Age Friendly Ireland - workshop on climate action and older adults.

Peer to Peer Learning

The ICLR D attends a number of conferences over the years based on relevant themes, contributions to ICLR D's knowledge-base, and role in building the network. Conferences attended by representatives of the ICLR D over the current financial year included:

- 26 June 2022: Density v. Nature in Cities? No More False Choices
- 21-22 June 2022: MOT (on-line) - Borders Forum 2022
- 31 March 2022: Smart Growth - Effective Conservatism
- 29 March 2022: ESPON Seminar (on-line) - From ESPON 2020 to ESPON 2030
- 23 February 2022: Rural Voices Seminar with DRCD and NUI Galway (online) - Regional Vacancy and Dereliction Analysis in the Northern and Western Region
- 16 February 2022: ESPON Seminar (on-line) - Challenges and Opportunities for Shrinking Areas
- 10 February 2022: Nordic-Irish Partnership for Smart Cities (online) - Circular Economy: How to do it Smart
- 1-2 December 2021: ESPON Seminar (online) - Quality of Life for territorial and citizen-centric policies
- 16 November 2021: ESRI & NIESR Initiative (online) - Launch of the All Island Economy Research Project
- 19 October 2021: Nordic-Irish Partnership for Smart Cities (online) - Smart community care solutions for an aging population
- 7 October 2021: Co-operation Ireland (online) - All-Island Local Authority Forum Climate Summit
- 24 September 2021: Centre for Cross Border Studies Annual Conference (online) - Testing the health of conditions for post-Brexit cooperation: The evolving political and social contexts.

The ICLR D continues to explore opportunities to collaborate with other cross-border/all-island networks.

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Interview Panels

During this current financial year, the ICLRD Director was invited to sit on the following interview panel:

- Maynooth University - Interviewer for MU/Business School/IVI Post-Doctoral Position with focus on Pseudonymous Economy
- Interviews: 25 and 28 March 2022.

Academic Review

In November 2021, the ICLRD Director was invited to be part of an external three-member panel for the Validation and Review of the BSc (Hons) in Spatial Planning & Environmental Management (TU835) within the TU Dublin School of Transport Engineering Environment & Planning. The review took place in May 2022; with follow-up reporting in June 2022.

External Consultations

During the past twelve months, the ICLRD supported the NWRDG (North West Regional Development Group) on making the following submission:

- September 2021: DAERA - Public Consultation on Rural Policy Framework for Northern Ireland.

Technical Assistance and Support

North West Gateway Initiative

Building on support services that have been in place since 2015, Donegal County Council and Derry City and Strabane District Council - with Derry City and Strabane District Council as the lead - awarded a six-month contract to the ICLRD. Covering the period July-December 2021, this contract covered a package of strategic supports reflecting the evolving processes and structures now dominating the growth and development of the North West, and the key role of the Councils within this. The contract largely focused on supporting the North West Strategic Growth Partnership (NWSGP), and the wider community of stakeholders who are, over time, becoming key players in the co-design, support and delivery of the diversity of actions under the three strategic growth pillars underpinning the North West City Region. Valued at £24,916 (excl. VAT), a particular emphasis was placed on building capacity to promote regional priorities as detailed in the North West City Region Ireland/Northern Ireland Statement of Regional Priorities (February 2021), the Green Transformation of the North West City Region of Ireland/Northern Ireland Statement of Intent (March 2021), and the emerging Issues Paper for the North West City Region Spatial Strategy. , associated strategic briefings, and to support the Councils and other key NWSGP stakeholders in their implementation. The value of this contract is £24,916 (excl. VAT). This contract, valued at Stg£33,247 (excl. VAT) centred on the ICLRD supporting the Councils in supporting the work programmes of the North West Strategic Growth Partnership (the new structure established in 2016 centred on senior Government Department representatives working with the Councils to progress priority programmes for the North West). Key elements of the work programme under this contract include (not exhaustive):

- Provision of ongoing supports and facilitation to senior management incl. provision of continued capacity building for the regional development process, with a strong emphasis being placed on developing the City Region;
- Convening and facilitating the NW Planners Forum;
- Continued advocacy for key infrastructural improvements across the North West City Region;
- On-going facilitation, advocacy and strategic liaison with key Governmental stakeholders relating to the growth and development of the City Region through the NWSGP process;
- Identification of, and strategic advice and mentoring to, project stakeholders (external to Council) in relation to the place-shaping agenda and the place-based leadership model;
- Exploring opportunities for policy and project alignment with the principles of the EU Green Deal;
- Convening and facilitation of a Green Transformation Working Group and building on existing

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green infrastructure investments as the region positions itself as a living lab for green transformation/growth;

- Continued strategic support relating to the securing of funds (including NWRDF) associated with the regional growth process;
- Convening and facilitation of a Climate Change Working Group; and
- Provision of capacity building and support in relation to progression of the regional climate adaptation and regional energy security strategies.

In December 2021, the Councils' extended the contract with ICLRD by nine months (December 2021 - August 2022). Under this programme, the ICLRD will continue to support Derry City and Strabane District Council and Donegal County Council - together with other national and regional stakeholders - in advancing the new structures and processes for collaborative working around identified shared key priority areas in the North West City Region (NWCRC). Under this programme, key activities will include:

- On-going engagement and support to the Green Transformation Working Group and the NW Planners Forum, with a particular emphasis on progressing their identified priorities;
- Continued strategic support on the issue of Higher Education, research and innovation and the Cross-Border FE HE Cluster for the North West City Region, noting the NDNA commitment to expansion of UU – Magee Campus, and the confirmation of Technological University status for LylIT and institutional partners in the West and North West of Ireland;
- Working in the context of overall support to the NWSGP and its objectives, the identification of, and strategic advice and mentoring to, regional stakeholders in relation to connectivity of proposals and collaborative working approaches with Councils, relationship-building and development methodologies consistent with the place-shaping agenda and the place-based leadership model;
- Exploring opportunities for policy and project alignment with the principles of the EU Green Deal; building on the Green Transformation Statement of Intent as published by both Councils and existing green infrastructure investments as the region positions itself as a living lab for green transformation/growth; and
- Continued strategic support relating to the securing of funds (including NWRDF) associated with the regional growth process; considering also opportunities under the new EU Cohesion programmes incl. PEACE PLUS; with funding calls expected in early 2022.

In July 2022, the Councils invited ICLRD to submit a further proposal of supports covering the period September 2022 to March 2023.

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PALS Ireland

Discussions continue in exploring options to pilot a PALS Programme in Ireland.

AILG - The 21st Century Councillor in Ireland

As part of wider discussions being held with Maynooth University, the ICLRD is part of a research funding proposal being co-designed with the Association of Irish Local Government (AILG) on the role of the councillor in the 21st Century. This is part of a two-year strategic alliance between AILG and MU on the research, training and advocacy needs of the AILG members over the short to medium term. Valued at €34,987 (excl. VAT), this research considers a range of contextual issues that are reshaping local government, examines the roles that councillors are playing, or recognise that they will need to be playing, within their organisations' and localities, and it explores a number of challenges, as follows, all of which are pertinent to contemporary local government in Ireland. The research will contribute to a better understanding of the training needs and capacity building supports required by Ireland's 949 elected officials. This project commenced in May 2021; and is scheduled to conclude in Qtr. 1, 2023. During this financial year, an emphasis was placed on the international literature review, the design of the on-line survey (circulated to all 949 elected members of local government) and commencement of one-to-one interviews.

Southern Regional Assembly - Smart Region Definition and Framework to Facilitate Smart Cities Driving a Smart Region

The ICLRD is part of a wider Maynooth University Team that has been commissioned by the Southern Regional Assembly in March 2021 to assist them in the development of a Smart Region Framework that capitalises on the smart city and smart town/village initiatives already underway. Valued at €21,576 excl. VAT, this programme involves three work packages:

- Work Package (WP) 1 – Smart Region Consultation
- Work Package (WP) 2 – Smart Regions Good Practice Research
- Work Package (WP) 3 – A Framework Report to Assist Stakeholder Initiatives in Pursuit of a Smart Region.

The work programme concluded in July 2022, with the development of three reports:

- Report 1: Towards a Smart Southern Region: Smart Region Consultation
- Report 2: Towards a Smart Southern Region: International Approaches to, and Good Practice in, the development of Smart Regions
- Report 3: Towards a Smart Southern Region: Smart Region Maturity Framework for the Southern Region

It is expected that these reports will be formally launched in Qtr. 1, 2023 - as part of a wider initiative on the 'Smart Region' by the Southern Regional Assembly.

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Donegal County Council - Developing a Scoping Paper for A North West Metropolitan Spatial Strategy

On behalf of both Councils in the NW, the ICLRD was commissioned by Donegal County Council in June 2021 to develop a North West Metropolitan Spatial Strategy Scoping Paper. This builds on the recognition of the North West City Region (NWCR) in both the National Planning Framework (2018) and its interpretation in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (2020). This is seen as a precursor by both Councils to the development of a cross-border spatial strategy for the NWCR. The aim of this project is to scope out the strategic direction, objectives, project plan, status, government arrangements, resources, assets and appropriate funding mechanisms required to carry out a Joint North West Metropolitan Growth Strategy. This Initial Scoping document will provide a framework for project actions to pave the way for the first Cross Border Spatial Strategy and provide a planning context for the higher value city region in the North West. A draft report was submitted to the Councils for consideration in December 2021; with a final report submitted in March 2022. This work programme was valued at €17,688 (excl. VAT).

Financial review

For the year ended 31 July 2022, income is £133,823 (2021: £145,982) a decrease of £12,159 largely due to Commuting Study reducing. Expenditure for the year ended 31 July 2022 is £117,840 (2021: £75,378) an increase of £42,462 largely due to research expenditure.

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Financial review *(continued)*

Reserves Policy

The charity's reserve policy is to retain a level of free reserves which matches the needs of the organisation both at the current time and in the foreseeable future. The charity has minimal free reserves of £26,692 and the charity's reserves policy is reviewed annually. Its reserves policy is that funds are to be expended within 18 months, which the Executive Committee members consider appropriate to the charity's circumstances and the timing of funding and expenditure. The charity's free reserves are total funds, excluding restricted funds.

The charity monitors its income, expenditure and obligations on a quarterly basis and requests sufficient funds from its primary funders to cover its obligations. Activities are programmed to match expected funding levels on an annual basis.

From 1 August 2020, the ICLRD moved its accounting practices online, using Xero accounts software.

Risk Management

The Executive Committee have assessed the major risks to which the charity is exposed, in particular those relating to the operations and finances of the charity, and are satisfied that systems are in place to mitigate any exposure to those risks.

Annual Monitoring Returns

As of May 2020, the ICLRD is required to file Annual Monitoring Returns to The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland. The ICLRD filed its third return in May relating to the audit period 1 August 2020-31 July 2021.

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Year ended 31 July 2022

Plans for future periods

Plans for Future Years

The focus of activities for the next audit period (August 2022 to July 2023) is on the sourcing of funds for the year in question as well as the period 2023-2025, nurturing new partnership arrangements with the National Centre for Smart Growth Research and Education (University of Maryland), building on the success of the webinar series held in place of an annual conference during 2021 and 2022 in light of COVID-19 and ongoing public health restrictions as a staple of the ICLRD offering, and the continued support to the North West City Region, with a key focus on facilitating the North West Strategic Growth Partnership (NWSGP) and engaging with strategic regional and national stakeholders as appropriate in support of the three regional growth pillars. The Centre aims to undertake a number of events on topical issues in order to keep ICLRD active in the policy-praxis space of spatial planning and local and regional development.

The ICLRD management, including both the Executive Committee and reconstituted Advisory Board, will continue to review the Centre - in terms of its structures, operations and funding model. The review will cover such issues as how the ICLRD can/will respond to emerging trends, feed into policy across both jurisdictions, and strengthen the organisational structure.

In funding terms, the objective is to diversify the Centre's sources of funding - with particular attention to be paid to supporting local government programmes and change management processes. This includes exploring opportunities under the EU Cohesion Programme 2021-2017 and Ireland-US funds. The implications of Brexit on the Centre's ability- or not - to avail of opportunities under the former will be kept under constant review by the Board.

ICLRD Event Series 2023

The ICLRD will hold further events in 2023 - focusing both on ICLRD research and topical policy issues. Whether these take place in-person or online has not yet been decided. Initial discussions at Board level currently indicate a mixed approach being adopted.

Networking

- *Supporting the North West:* Under the current contract with Derry City and Strabane District Council, the ICLRD will be working with the councils and a number of key Central Government Departments in devising new operational structures for the North West under three key pillars of operation: a) Regional Economic Growth and Investment; b) Regional Physical & Environmental Development; and c) Regional Social and Community Cohesion and Well-Being. Supports will continue to be provided to the NW Planners Forum and ongoing collaborations with the NSMC in supporting thematic workshop discussions which in turn will feed into future work programmes.
- *Ad-Hoc Group for North-South and East-West Co-operation:* The ICLRD will continue to support the workings of the Ad-Hoc Group, engaging as relevant to ICLRD's core interests.
- *Peace and Reconciliation - Fostering Collaborative Action:* The ICLRD will continue to explore the linkages between peace and reconciliation and local and regional development with a particular focus on identifying key stakeholders interested in looking at the contribution of local and regional development to the peace process.

Publications

- Submissions are being sought for new briefing papers as part of the series.

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- Following completion of the InPLACE Phase 1/Project Interim Report in September 2022, the research team are currently identifying further articles to be published during the timeframe of this programme - including potential peer-reviewed journal articles.

Media

- The press release announcing the commencement of the InPLACE study in April 2021 was picked up by a number of national and regional publications - and radio media. This included an interview on Limerick's Live 95FM with Prof. Des McCafferty (Project PI) on 2 September 2021. As the project progresses, and findings emerge, it is hoped that further media interest in this project can be secured.

Maynooth University Business Plan and Ulster University Supports

During the financial year 2017-2018, a proposal was developed by the ICLRD to place the Centre on a Business Plan within Maynooth University. With the support of the then Maynooth University nominee on the Executive Board, Prof. Jim Walsh, a Business Plan was prepared for the next three years. In order to remove the uncertainty associated with funding based on small projects and to safeguard continuity in implementation, Maynooth University was requested to underwrite the Business Plan with a commitment of 30k euro per annum for three years. The Business Plan was approved in March 2018; with agreement that it would be activated on 1 August 2018 to coincide with the ICLRD's new financial year, Ulster University, as a core University Partner, agreed to contribute 50% of the 30k pa required to underwrite the Business Plan. In return, the ICLRD Executive Board commit to securing external funding to underpin a sustainable business model. The Business Plan concluded in July 2021.

Maynooth University, through its nominee on the Executive Board, Prof. Brian Donnellan, sought and secured approval from the Maynooth University Executive for a second three-year Business Plan, operating from 1 August 2021 to 31 July 2024. Again, Ulster University as a core partner will contribute 50% of the 30k commitment per annum for the three-year timeframe of the renewed Business Plan.

Responding to COVID-19

In May 2020, at the first ICLRD Executive Board meeting held since COVID-19 disrupted normal working practices in March, the Trustees deemed it necessary that the potential impacts of the global pandemic should be added to the Centre's Risk Register. This has been reviewed at every subsequent Board meeting. With ICLRD having no fixed assts, pensions assets or investments, the impact on the Centre's financial statements has been minimal.

In order to protect members of the ICLRD research community, the Trustees moved quickly to reflect the home-working policies of the core University partners, and to move all meetings (incl. Executive Board meetings), events and fieldwork on-line. Researchers were encouraged to postpone foreign travel. As schools and childcare services entered phases of lockdown intermittently, the Trustees supported flexible working hours; recognising that a number of the researchers needed to balance work with childcare and home-schooling. The Chair scheduled bi-monthly meetings with the Director to review projects, tender opportunities, charity financials, etc. and check-in on the welfare of the research community. These meetings are now a permanent feature of ICLRD's governance structures.

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Plans for future periods *(continued)*

Through the core University partners, training was provided to a number of the research community in use of online technologies and fieldwork tools. This includes Zoom and MS Teams. In addition, Maynooth University Social Sciences Institute (MUSSI) committed to providing logistical supports to ICLRD for all online events. This continued during the term of this audit period.

A number of research projects needed to be reviewed in terms of fieldwork methodologies and timeframe for delivery. These reviews took place in consultation with the relevant funders, and mutually beneficial arrangement put in place. These were reviewed regularly throughout each work stream.

The ICLRD is a small, niche research centre whose operating model has always been agile, adaptable to changing circumstances and accommodating of clients changing needs. This operational model has assisted the ICLRD greatly in dealing with the disruptions - current and expected - resulting from COVID-19. As restrictions have, and continue to, ease, the ICLRD is shifting to a hybrid model of both in-person and on-line activities - particularly in relation to meetings and fieldwork.

Funding

The ICLRD continues to scope the potential for core funding from a range of agencies - ranging from central government departments, especially those involved in cross-border cooperation and the reform of public administration in Northern Ireland and Ireland, philanthropic bodies, and funding agencies. The ICLRD will also examine the opportunities to develop proposals for the new round of EU funding programmes (2021-2027) - PEACE PLUS, INTERREG, ESPON, etc. - and explore funding opportunities among various Government Departments (Department of Foreign Affairs 'Reconciliation Fund', Shared Island Funds) and other foundations.

Applications submitted over the past three months / or in train include:

- *European Parliament - Impact of Brexit:* In September 2022, the ICLRD Director was invited to develop a research paper on behalf of the REGI Committee focusing on 'The Impact of Brexit on the Development of Irish Regions and their Cross-Border Cooperation'. This work programme is valued at €13,000 and is being offered to the Director under a 'Contract Offer' based on her previous research into cross-border cooperation and models of collaboration. As the European Parliament will only enter into contract with an EU Member State, this work, if contracted, will be led by Maynooth University.
- *All Island Spatial Knowledge Hub:* Following the unsuccessful RePLAN application under the HEA North South Research Fund call (submitted in November 2021), the ICLRD together with AIRO have been meeting with a number of regional and national stakeholders on the possibility of pulling together a funding consortium to support the development of the All Ireland Spatial Knowledge Hub - building on the emerging results from Census 21 (NI) and Census 22 (RoI). A written proposal to share with interested parties in the hope of progressing the conversations and securing funding is currently being developed and will be shared before the end of 2022 with interested parties.
- In December 2022, the Department of An Taoiseach announced that a new call under the HEA North South Research Fund (a Shared Island Unit Initiative) will be issued in 2023. The ICLRD will pull together a working group to advance a proposal under this in Qtr 1, 2023.

The ICLRD's strong reputation in delivering its Executive Training and Animation programmes offers opportunities to provide this training on a fee basis and with funding from various sources.

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Trustees' responsibilities statement

The trustees, who are also directors for the purposes of company law, are responsible for preparing the trustees' report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the charity trustees to prepare financial statements for each year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, for that period.

In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the applicable Charities SORP;
- make judgments and accounting estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

The trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charity's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Auditor

Each of the persons who is a trustee at the date of approval of this report confirms that:

- so far as they are aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the charity's auditor is unaware; and
- they have taken all steps that they ought to have taken as a trustee to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the charity's auditor is aware of that information.

The trustees' annual report and the strategic report were approved on 4 April 2023 and signed on behalf of the board of trustees by:



Prof L Maguire
Trustee