

# The International Centre for Local and Regional Development

Company Limited by Guarantee

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

Year ended 31 July 2023

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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 2023.

## Reference and administrative details

<b>Registered charity name</b>	The International Centre for Local and Regional Development
<b>Charity registration number</b>	104019
<b>Company registration number</b>	NI 060144
<b>Principal office and registered office</b>	Belfast School of Architecture & Built Environment Ulster University York Street BT15 1ED Belfast

## The trustees

	Mr D McSorley	(Resigned 24 February 2023)
	Prof G Knapp	
	Ms F McCandless	(Appointed 7 March 2023)
	Ms M MacIntyre	
	Prof L Maguire	
	Prof B Donnellan	
	Mr P Maguire	
	Mr K Lynch	(Appointed 8 April 2024)

**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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## 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, TU Dublin, 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.

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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:

- (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. Meetings of the Board are co-chaired by Mr. Pádraig Maguire, Senior Planner, Meath County Council (member of the Executive Board) and Prof. Peter Roberts, Former Chairperson of Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE). Meetings during this financial year took place on:

- 7<sup>th</sup> March 2023;
- 14<sup>th</sup> September 2022 (jointly with Executive Board); and
- 4<sup>th</sup> May 2022.

In July 2017, the inaugural meeting of the ICLRD Research Forum was held in Belfast. 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 9<sup>th</sup> 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 Board; and will attend Executive Board meetings in an 'observer' capacity;
- 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, and reviewed annually);
- 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 ICLRD's financial year).

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

- 20 June 2023;
- 4 April 2023 (also the AGM);
- 16 February 2023;
- 23 November 2022; and
- 14 September 2022 (joint with Advisory Board).

#### **Objectives and activities**

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.

#### ***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, place-making, government and governance, sustainable development, community development, professional education, climate change, environmental management and protection.

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## Objectives and activities *(continued)*

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 policymakers, 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 policymakers 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.

## 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.

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**Objectives and activities** *(continued)*

## **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.

## **Strategic report**

The following sections for achievements and performance and financial review form the strategic report of the charity.

## **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:

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##### *InPLACE: The Changing Spatial Relationship between Home and Workplace*

The overall aim of the InPLACE study is to elucidate the impacts of pre- and post-COVID commuting on people and place by considering the changing spatial relationships between home and workplace. Taking a case study approach, and an island of Ireland perspective, the research examined the interplay between home, community and workplace across seven towns that experience varying levels of outcommuting and, in particular, long-duration commuting (i.e. in excess of 45 minutes each way). The study also included a focus on two towns in the State of Maryland, USA. Following an almost two-year period of proposal refinement and sourcing of funds, the InPLACE (Investigating Planning, Placemaking and Commuting) study commenced in April 2021. This was originally envisaged as a 24-month research programme, scheduled to conclude in May 2023; with delivery to take place over two-phases:

- Phase 1: April 2021 – March 2022;
- Phase 2: April 2022 – March 2023;
- Final Report: May 2023.

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. The revised timelines for the project are as follows:

- Phase 1: April 2021 – September 2022;
- Phase 2: October 2022 – September 2023;
- Final Report: December 2023.

In funding terms, this research was made possible by research grants received from the following bodies: Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR), Local Government Management Agency (LGMA), the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Clare County Council, Cork County Council, Tomar Trust, the Department for Infrastructure NI and the Maryland Department of Transport.

The research team draws on ICLRD colleagues from Maynooth University, Ulster University, 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; and the
- Research Advisory Group – involving representatives from Translink, QUB, Grow Remote, Rural Residents Network/Rural Community Network, Wexford Development Partnership and Western Development Commission.

Taking a case study approach, Phase 1 focused on three towns:

1. Ennistymon-Lahinch, County Clare (as a low commuting/control town)
2. Newtownmountkennedy, County Wicklow
3. Dundrum, County Down.

The Interim Report, drawing on Phase 1 findings (qualitative and quantitative) was prepared in September 2022; and ratified by both the Operational Partnership Group and the Research Advisory Group in October 2022.

Phase 2 commenced in October 2022, focusing on a further four case study towns:

1. Kantuck-Banteer, County Cork
  2. Aghagallon, County Antrim
  3. Sallins, County Kildare
  4. Mountbellew-Moylough, County Galway.
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The study also 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.

By the end June 2023, the survey instrument across all case study towns had been closed, and analysis and cleaning of the dataset was underway. Interviews with key stakeholders in each town were drawing to a close; with a suite of policy-focused interviews to be undertaken in Autumn 2023 following initial review of the emerging findings and identification of the key policy issues. This will be supplemented with data from the Census '21 in Northern Ireland and Census '22 in Ireland data when published. This is expected in Qtr. 4. Valued at €268,000 (VAT exempt), 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 international, European and national events in 2022 and 2023. These included:

- Presentation to the North West Regional Development Group, 22 June 2023, Co-Lab, ATU Letterkenny Campus. Presentation on *ICLRD's Role in Supporting the North West Strategic Growth Partnership structures and process*.
- Workshop host and presentation at the Innovation Value Institute (IVI) Summit Workshop, Leadership of Urban Digital Innovation for Public Value, 21 June 2023, Maynooth University in partnership with the Digital Cities for Change (DC2) Programme at the University of Cambridge. Presentation on *Smarter 'Place-Making'? Regional-Local Communities of Practice Fostering Innovation*
- Discussant at the Irish Planning Institute (IPI) Planning Education Workshop, 12 June 2023, online.
- Presentation to the Symposium on the Intersection of Spatial Planning, Climate, and Social Equity, hosted by the Lincoln Institute for Land Policy, the National Center for Smart Growth at the University of Maryland, UCD and ICLRD, 7-8 June 2023 in Newman House, Dublin. Presentation on *Spatial Planning in the Irish Border Region*.
- Panel discussant at the EU Funding Conference hosted by the Irish Regions European Office, 19<sup>th</sup> April 2023, Athlone. Theme of *Connecting, Communicating and Collaborating – Irish Regions Cooperating Across the EU*.

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## *Symposium on the Intersection of Spatial Planning, Climate, and Social Equity*

Held over two days, this international symposium recognised that 2023 was a time of significant change at the dawn of the post-COVID era. New territorial conflicts, changing technologies, climate change, and the pressing need to address social inequities pose significant challenges that current planning systems are ill-equipped to address. This Symposium on the Intersection of Spatial Planning, Climate and Social Equity, held on 7-8 June in Newman House, Dublin and led by the Lincoln Institute for Land Policy and the National Center for Smart Growth at the University of Maryland, brought together leading international academics and policy-makers to assess spatial planning policy and processes, and their intersections, in the context of these global challenges. Organised into ten sessions, the first day focused on spatial planning in Europe and the United States, and included sessions that addressed trends and disruptors, the current state of planning, new conceptual frameworks, and a closing session to integrate the day's conversations. The second day focused on planning for climate change and social equity and closed with a final integrating session.

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

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

##### *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 12<sup>th</sup> 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 online:

- 3 May 2023;
- 1 February 2023; and
- 5 October 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 by a member of the InPLACE Research Team.

##### *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:

- 11 October 2023;
- 23 February 2023; and
- 6 October 2022

##### *Engagement with Government*

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

- 16 June 2023: Shared Island Dialogue - Education Systems and Connecting Communities
- 5 December 2022: 2<sup>nd</sup> Shared Island Forum
- 7 October 2022: Shared Island – Shared Opportunity (organised by the National Economic and Social Council)

##### *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.

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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.

### *Citizen Rural*

The Director has been asked to chair the Steering Group over-seeing the Irish Research Council COALESE Funded project, *Citizen Rural – Digital Data for Participative Democracy in Remote Places*. The project's living lab is County Roscommon, and its overall objective is to consider how robust social, economic and environmental evidence bases can be established for rural geographies that do not have the same infrastructure density as urban places, and how can citizens engage with data for the co-design of strategies that contribute to the sustainable development of their localities. This is a two-year project, 2022-2024. Three meetings of the Steering Group have been held to date (October 2022, February 2023, June 2023). A national conference is planned for October 2023, which the ICLRD has agreed to co-sponsor. With the Director also helping in the design of the programme, the Citizen Rural team have identified ICLRD as a co-host of this one-day event.

### *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.

### *External Engagement*

Over this financial year, the ICLRD was 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:

- 18 May 2023: Maynooth University workshop on 'Linking Research with Public Policy',
- 22 February 2023: Maynooth Workshop with Southern Regional Assembly on 'Achieving Regional Equality'
- 21 February 2023: ESPON Focus Group on 'Borders' (online)
- 18 January 2023: Galway County Council - Presentation to Ballinasloe Municipal District on 'InPLACE: Investigating Planning, Place-making and Commuting'
- 14 October 2022: Cork County Council – Presentation to Kanturk Municipal District on 'InPLACE: Investigating Planning, Place-making and Commuting'

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## *Peer to Peer Learning*

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

- 21-22 June 2023: IVI Summit (Maynooth University) - *Co-Creating the Digital World; beyond 2027*
- 14-15 June 2023: ESPON Seminar - Territorial perspective of green industrialisation
- 8 March 2023: OECD - *Rural-urban partnerships: a key tool for recovery*
- 22 February 2023: Book Launch – *Income Distribution and Redistribution in Ireland – A Geographical Exploration*, Prof. Jim Walsh, Hosted by Maynooth University Social Sciences Institute, Maynooth University.
- 8 February 2023: GoGreenRoutes - *Near Nature: Green Space and Environmental Justice*,
- 7-9 December 2022: ESPON Seminar - *Entrepreneurial regional governance*
- 15 November 2022: Co-operation Ireland (online) - All-Island Local Authority Forum Climate Summit
- 29 September 2022: Centre for Cross Border Studies 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conference - *Commitment, Resilience and Perseverance: New challenges and approaches to cross-border cooperation, mobility and relations.*
- 28-30 September 2022: 13<sup>th</sup> OECD Rural Development Conference - *Building Sustainable, Resilient and Thriving Rural Places*
- 28 September 2022: ESPON Seminar - *20 years of ESPON*
- 8 September 2022: Regional Studies Association Annual Conference, Maynooth University.

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

## *Interview Panels*

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

- Donegal County Council – Interviewer for Executive Planner Panel
  - Interviews: 8, 10 and 22 May 2023.
- Maynooth University – Interviewer for Edward M. Kennedy Institute Research Fellow Position
  - Interviews: 15 November 2022.
- Maynooth University – Interviewer for MU/CONFIRM Research Fellow Position
  - Interviews: 30 September 2022.

## *Leadership Training*

Between October 2022 and August 2023, the Director completed the Aurora Leadership Programme in Maynooth University. Aurora is a leadership programme developed to address the under-representation of women in senior leadership posts in Irish and UK Higher Education Institutions and is targeted at women in academic and professional services roles across all academic disciplines and throughout central university services.

# The International Centre for Local and Regional Development

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

Year ended 31 July 2023

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## Technical Assistance and Support

### *North West Gateway Initiative*

From December 2021 to August 2022, the ICLRD continued to provide expert mentoring of the NWRDG and Senior Council Staff, and liaise with senior government representatives from the North West Strategic Growth Partnership. Valued at Stg £24,916 (excl. VAT), this work programme included working in partnership with the NSMC Joint Secretariat to advance the priorities for the region as laid out in the North West City Region Ireland/Northern Ireland Statement of Regional Priorities (May 2021) through thematic discussions. Relations with the Shared Island Unit were further nurtured; and strategic supports were provided to both Councils on joint applications to the Shared Island Local Government Co-operation initiative.

Building on this, and other 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 seven-month contract to the ICLRD. Covering the period September 2022-March 2023, 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, valued at Stg £26,216 (excl. VAT), supported the Councils in advancing the programme of works surrounding the North West City Region under the three pillars, and ongoing liaison with senior government representatives from the North West Strategic Growth Partnership (NWSGP) – both in advance of and following the December meeting of the NWSGP. This included ongoing collaborations with the NSMC Joint Secretariat in advancing the priorities of the region through both scheduling of, and facilitation of discussions at, thematic workshops on key priority themes, namely:

- 27 February 2023: Higher and Further Education; and
- 16 September 2022; Economy.

The NESR research, Exploring Shared Opportunities in the North West: Findings from Focus Groups, (Report No. 26) was launched – providing a place-based inquiry of the North West experience of co-operation, the barriers and the enablers. The focus was on the lived experience of people in the border areas, with the aim of exploring two integrated thematic issues – sustainability and connectivity. The report is available here:

<https://www.nesc.ie/publications/exploring-shared-opportunities-in-the-north-west-findings-from-focus-groups/>

Discussions continued with the North West Planners Forum on advancing the spatial strategy for the metropolitan area. The Co-Design team was re-activated to progress the priorities of the region; and a short reflective paper on the NWSGP – Process, Methodology and Learning was drafted at the behest of the Co-Design Team for circulation to wider government. The paper summarises the context, rationale and significance of the North West Strategic Growth Partnership (NWSGP) model as a best practice example of interjurisdictional territorial co-operation and an important instrument for the facilitation of thematic and institutional co-operation on the Ireland/Northern Ireland border. Other key elements of the work programme under this contract included (not exhaustive):

- Convening and facilitating the NW Planners Forum;
  - Continued advocacy for key infrastructural improvements across the North West City Region;
  - 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 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.
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### Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

#### Year ended 31 July 2023

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In April 2023, the Councils' awarded the ICLRD with a further twelve months contract (April 2023 – March 2024). Under this programme, valued at Stg £51,284 (excl. VAT), 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 (NWCR). Under this programme, key activities will include:

- On-going supports to senior management on an advisory and consultative basis, provision of continued capacity building for the regional development process, with a strong emphasis being placed on developing the City Region, and associated skills base required to drive and facilitate it within and across the institutions who are stakeholders to the regional growth process;
- Continued advocacy for key infrastructural improvements across the North West City Region; feeding into, as relevant, policies relating to economic development, sustainable tourism, heritage management/ conservation, green economy, climate adaptation, etc. This will include opportunities to explore the potential for policy and project alignment with overall EU Cohesion Policy.
- 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 incl. one-on-one briefings, awareness-raising of the international development methodology which underlies the North West project and why it is important not only in East/West and North/South but also in European and global terms, programme development and the ongoing animation of collaborative multi-stakeholder processes;
- Working in partnership with the NSMC Joint Secretariat, via Thematic Discussions, to advance the priorities for the region as laid out in the North West City Region Ireland/Northern Ireland Statement of Regional Priorities (May 2021); through on-going liaison and development supports, in areas such as economy, health, tourism, higher education, etc. This has included, to date:
  - 15 May 2023: Thematic Workshop – Health; and
  - 28 April 2023: Thematic Workshop – Tourism.
- Continued strategic liaison with members of the NWRDG in the development and nurturing of EU networks, and the promotion of the NWCR as a strong urban functional Euro-region;
- On-going engagement and support to Council-to-Council officer networks and initiatives, including the NW Planners Forum, staff involved in wider the Green Transformation, and economy and investment cooperation, with a particular emphasis on progressing their identified priorities;
- Continued strategic support on the issue of Higher Education and skills, research and innovation and the Cross-Border FE HE Cluster for the North West City Region in light of recent thematic workshop of higher and further education held with NSMC Joint Secretariat;
- As appropriate, supports to project teams working on PEACE PLUS applications where the focus is commensurate with regional growth priorities and the region's ambition;
- Engagement with the Department of Housing Local Government and Heritage on the first revision of the National Planning Framework;
- Ongoing supports to the work of the reconvened Core Co-Design Team incl. the Council CEOs, NSMC Joint Secretaries/TEO/DFAT, and Department of Foreign Affairs;

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Year ended 31 July 2023

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## *Building Shared Innovation Ecosystems*

In support of the North West Cross-Border Further Education-Higher Education Cluster, the ICLRD worked closely with Atlantic Technological University (ATU) and UU on the development of a position paper on 'Building Shared Innovation Ecosystems'. This desk-based research over April-May 2023 considered the role of HEIs in repositioning regions in economic and sustainable development terms, and improving the competitiveness of locations. The paper contends that HEIs institutions are central to shaping and/or contributing to regional innovation and building innovation eco-systems, knowledge-production and labour market up-skilling, attracting and retaining highly-skilled academics/researchers – provided they operate to a level playing field. This includes being enabled to attract 'star' academics at professorship scale and in turn, attract and retain high quality researchers and funding. The paper was submitted to ATU in May 2023.

## *PALS Ireland*

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

## *AILG – The 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 during this financial year, the international literature review and fieldwork was concluded. This included 500 survey responses (out of 949 councillors – a 53% response rate), and approx. 48 interviews and 6 focus groups. The datasets are currently being cleaned and coded, and drafting of the final report will commence in Qtr. 3, 2023. It is intended that the final report will be concluded by Qtr. 4, 2023.

## *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 involved 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

The reports were formally launched on the 18<sup>th</sup> January 2023 via an online webinar organised by the Southern Regional Assembly. Details here: <https://ssrlaunch2023.vfairs.com/>

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Year ended 31 July 2023

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Copies of the reports are available on the ICLRD website –

<https://iclrld.org/2023/04/22/report-series-informing-development-of-smart-southern-region-launched/> - and the reports now form part of the Southern Regional Assembly's wider initiative on the 'Smart Southern Region'.

*European Parliament – The Impact of Brexit on the Development of Irish Regions and their Cross-Border Cooperation.*

In September 2022, the ICLRD Director was invited to develop a research paper on behalf of the European Parliament Committee on Regional Development (REGI) focusing on 'The Impact of Brexit on the Development of Irish Regions and their Cross-Border Cooperation'. The Director invited Prof. Katy Hayward of Queens University Belfast, a leading expert on Brexit, to co-author the report. Valued at €13,000, the overall purpose of this report is to explore the impact of Brexit on the development of Irish regions and their cross-border cooperation, recognising that cross-border cooperation on the island of Ireland is no longer primarily covered by common EU single market membership but is facilitated by a complex arena of legal agreements and policy arenas. Its focus, like many studies on Brexit, is not confined to the Irish border region but to the whole of Ireland, encompassing the three Regional Assembly areas – Northern and Western Regional Assembly (NWRA), Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly (EMRA) and Southern Regional Assembly (SRA) – two of which directly share a border with Northern Ireland. A draft report was submitted to the European Parliament in March 2023; and following detailed feedback, a final report was submitted in May 2023. The report is available to download at:

Main Report:

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2023/733127/IPOL\\_STU\(2023\)733127\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2023/733127/IPOL_STU(2023)733127_EN.pdf)

Summary:

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2023/733127/IPOL\\_STU\(2023\)733127\(SUM01\)\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2023/733127/IPOL_STU(2023)733127(SUM01)_EN.pdf)

*Cross Border Emergency Management Group – A Shared Island Proposal*

In April 2023, the ICLRD in partnership with Monaghan County Council/Monaghan County Fire Service and the Cross Border Emergency Management Group, secured funding under the cross-border shared island research-funded programme – All Island Disaster Risk Reduction Research Programme, administered by the Department of Defence, Office of Emergency Planning. The programme focus is on Public Safety Messaging in Border Communities as part of the Shared Island Unit's 'All-Island Resilience' Programme. Running from April 2023 – March 2024, and using two test-case sites (one located in Northern Ireland and one in Ireland), the research considers:

- a) How public safety messaging is currently delivered (digital, hard copy, social media, etc.) and to what extent this differs on either side of the border;
- b) How public safety messaging is currently understood by different parts of the community (in terms of age, gender, and ability); and
- c) How this messaging could be improved through a co-creation process involving citizen panels.

To date, the research team have been working with the Cross Border Emergency Management Group (CBEMG) on the identification of the two case study sites (namely Clones, County Monaghan and Lisnaskea, County Fermanagh), and building a database of current messaging platforms used (both in terms of context and content). A series of focus groups are planned for September/October 2023 – having been deferred following a traffic road accident in Clones in August. The value of this contract is €24,390 excl. of VAT.

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# The International Centre for Local and Regional Development

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

#### Year ended 31 July 2023

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##### **Financial review**

For the year ended 31 July 2023, income is £116,795 (2022: £133,823) a decrease of £17,028. Expenditure for the year ended 31 July 2023 is £140,264 (2022: £117,840) an increase of £22,424 largely due to research expenditure.

##### **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 £32,012 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 Executive Committee are satisfied with the year-end financial position and with the prospects for 2023-2024 which matches the needs of the organisation both at the current time and in the foreseeable future.

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 has been 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 fourth return in May relating to the audit period 1 August 2021-31 July 2022.

# The International Centre for Local and Regional Development

## Company Limited by Guarantee

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

Year ended 31 July 2023

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#### Plans for future periods

The focus of activities for the next audit period (August 2023 to July 2024) is on

- the sourcing of funds for the year in question as well as the period 2024-2027,
- nurturing new partnership arrangements with the National Centre for Smart Growth Research and Education (University of Maryland), with discussions well advanced on a new MOU;
- advancing a potential new partnership with TU Dublin;
- 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 returning to hosting of in-person events including an annual conference; 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 and Advisory Boards, 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 2021-2027 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 2023-2024*

The ICLRD will hold further events in 2023/24 – focusing both on ICLRD research and topical policy issues.

#### *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 – and associated follow-on actions - 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.

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

Year ended 31 July 2023

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## Plans for future periods *(continued)*

### *Publications*

- Submissions are being sought for new briefing papers as part of the series.
- Following completion of the InPLACE Phase 1/Project Interim Report in September 2022, the research team are currently identifying further articles to be published, both during the timeframe of this programme and upon its completion – including potential peer-reviewed journal articles.

## **Maynooth University Business Plan and Ulster University Supports**

The ICLRD is currently in its second joint three-year Business Plan arrangement with Maynooth University and Ulster University. This is quite common practice for niche research centres across academia. The first Business Plan covered the period (2018-2021); with the current arrangement covering the period 2021- 2024. The Plan represents a financial commitment of €30,000 per annum for three years; with both universities agreeing 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.

## **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 assets, 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.

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 resulting from COVID-19. During 2022/23, the ICLRD has continued to support its researchers in remote working to the extent that is required under ongoing public health guidance and in line with the core university partner guidelines. 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.

# The International Centre for Local and Regional Development

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

Year ended 31 July 2023

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#### Plans for future periods *(continued)*

##### 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:

- *All Island Spatial Knowledge Hub*: 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 has been developed to share with interested parties. Progressing this proposal is dependent on restoration of powers to Northern Ireland and greater certainty emerging around Government budgets.
- 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. As of July 2023, this call had not yet been opened. The ICLRD has pulled together a working group to in anticipation of this call advancing before end 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.

##### 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.

# The International Centre for Local and Regional Development

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

Year ended 31 July 2023

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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 22 April 2024 and signed on behalf of the board of trustees by:



Prof L Maguire  
Trustee