

Northern Ireland Fishery Harbour Authority

234th Board Meeting of the Authority

At the Downpatrick Office

on

Friday 29th September 2023 at 10.00am

Present:	David Knott (DK)– Interim Chair Kevin Quigley (KQ)– Chief Executive David Hill (DH) – Board Member Harry Wick (HW) – Board Member Lynn Gilmore (LG) – Board Member (Over Teams)
In attendance:	Belinda McCaughey (BMcC)– Accounts Administrator David Lindsay (DL) – Project Manager (item 7 only)
DAERA Sponsor Branch (Observer)	David Simpson (DS) – Head of Corporate Services John O’Neill (JO’N)

	Action
1. Chair’s Opening remarks	
<p><u>Welcome and Apologies</u></p> <p>DK welcomed all to the meeting and in particular DS and JO’N from DAERA. Two apologies received from Alan McKeown (AMcK) and Kate Burns (KB).</p> <p><u>Declaration of Interest</u></p> <p>LG, DH, HW & DK confirmed no additional Declarations of Interest. BMcC declared a conflict for item 9 and left the meeting for this item only.</p>	
2. Minutes of the Board Meeting – 29 June 2023	
<p><u>Comments and Approval</u></p> <p>Minutes were approved.</p> <p><u>Matters Arising</u></p> <p>Stakeholder engagement – establishing a measure of success. This is still to be addressed.</p> <p>Estate Management - there has been no further correspondence from those tenants wishing to forfeit their leases, we will await their instructions.</p> <p>Communication of Capital Works Plans - five new projects have been awarded at short notice; no meetings have yet been held to consult on the proposed Capital Works.</p> <p>Seafish Carbon Footprint Tool – contact details have been forwarded to Environmental Officer who is still to get in touch with LG.</p>	KQ

	Action
<p>Operational Environmental Matrix measures – these are still a WIP.</p> <p>All other matters arising were actioned or will appear later in this meeting.</p>	DK
<p>3. Executive Report</p>	
<p><u>CEO Report</u></p> <p>In Ardglass most of the fleet has tied up for the winter. This is earlier than is the norm. Only a few boats are still taking ice.</p> <p>In Kilkeel work is steady. KQ confirmed that the Harbour Master continues to lead the team well.</p> <p>Portavogie has 2 staff members currently on Sick Leave. HR issues are being addressed and staff members are being supported at this time.</p> <p>On the decommissioning site the Anchor point has been fitted and tested, we are now waiting for the concrete to cure. A 2nd test on the anchor may be required in the future.</p> <p>A tender is being prepared for the decommissioning of the abandoned vessels. This should go live next week.</p> <p>Part Time Admin Officer - Recruitment was successful. New staff member due to start early October 2023.</p> <p>Accounts – The original Business Plan was rejected but due to the excellent performance during the first 6 months of the year it has been possible to revise the budget and prepare an updated Business Plan.</p> <p>DK noted an improvement in the Stakeholder Communication and asked that Stakeholder Engagement becomes a permanent addition to the CEO Report.</p> <p>DH asked if the Stakeholders meetings could be scheduled during the winter months when vessels are not fishing. The recent Kilkeel meeting had a poor attendance (due in part to a conflict with the NIFPO Board Meeting). KQ will look at this.</p> <p>LG offered to share communication reports from Seafish on their current projects.</p> <p>FSDP – An update on progress will be provided on 6 October 2023 at a meeting to be held in C&O Milligan’s premises in Ardglass. DL will attend and report back on this meeting.</p> <p>DK commended the work done over the last year in building relationships within sponsor branch. JO’N advised he is on a 6 month appointment and will be leaving before Christmas. DAERA are experiencing a severe shortage of staff and many current appointments are being filled on a temporary basis.</p> <p><u>Balanced Scorecard – August 2023</u></p> <p>KQ talked to the current balanced scorecard.</p> <p>In particular:</p>	<p>KQ</p> <p>KQ</p> <p>LG</p>

	Action
<p>1D – Interim Health and Safety Meetings did not take place over the summer months but the next full meetings will take place in October.</p> <p>1E – Admin appointment will ease work for BMcC eventually. It will not be feasible to look at appointing another staff member this year. AMcK had previously highlighted the need for a deputy for KQ.</p> <p>2A – FSDP - no information available.</p> <p>2D – Estate Management Plan – This will not happen during the current year due to current workloads. Will be removed from this year’s Business Plan.</p> <p>3A – Environmental Action Plan Target - may not be able to deliver all. KQ will add reasons into the Recovery Plan column.</p> <p>3C – Abandoned Fishing Vessels – finally back to green. Plan is now on target to dismantle 3 vessels by year end. In Kilkeel discussions are taking place with a local business to decommission an abandoned vessel which is deteriorating.</p> <p>3D – Schools Education element will be removed from the revised Business Plan. Current Environmental Officer does not have the skills to carry this out.</p> <p><u>KPI’s</u></p> <p>KPI’s – overall score shows Amber due primarily to resource issues and ongoing dissatisfaction with low pay. KQ took questions.</p> <p>HR - Staff Morale is set at Amber. After a discussion it was decided to leave this at amber as there is still potential for this to deteriorate.</p> <p>Portavogie Dredging – Outer harbour has been completed but still no licence for the Inner Harbour.</p> <p>KQ plans to discuss wider issue of licencing with DAERA Marine Licencing.</p> <p>KQ confirmed a meeting has been held with DAERA to discuss the procedure for dealing with abandoned vessels. JO’N confirmed he is currently working on a paper to propose measures to prevent vessels being abandoned.</p>	<p>KQ</p> <p>KQ</p>
<p>4. Safety and Personnel</p>	
<p><u>Health and Safety / Port Marine Safety</u></p> <p>KQ noted that an Engineer with HSE experience has visited both Kilkeel and Portavogie Slipways to review improvements to the access to vessels using the slip. This report, once received, will be brought to a future Board Meeting.</p> <p><u>Section 75, Personnel and Training</u></p> <p>KQ confirmed that the main risk from losing the IIP status would be reputational. Key issues are Pay and communications. DK confirmed he has met with staff and communications are being maintained, however pay remains the critical issue.</p>	<p>KQ</p>

	Action
<p>KQ was asked about secondment for the temporary Assistant Project Manager post. This is a new job and the person appointed would need to have sufficient skills to hit the ground running.</p> <p>The Board believes there are opportunities for additional funding outside of DAERA but this will need to be researched. There is a need to develop some projects and access grant application expertise.</p> <p>DS commented that in the past there have been internal advertisements to see if anyone within the wider NICS is available to temporarily fill a post.</p> <p>KQ will forward the job description to DS.</p> <p>KQ updated the Board on the current funding requirement that all monies must be spent within the same financial year.</p> <p>DK – there is a need to investigate Peace+ funding but a degree of expertise is required which NIFHA does not presently have, there is potential to work in partnership with the councils or NGO’s that have such experience (See report at 7 below).</p> <p>DS confirmed funding is not straightforward. Funding within the department cannot be rolled over into the next financial year but would have to be accounted for in the next years budget. Possibility of Green Growth funding.</p>	KQ
<p>5. Finance and General Purposes Committee Update</p>	
<p><u>Report Presentation (including Finance Pack)</u></p> <p>DK spoke to the contents of his report.</p> <p>In particular:</p> <p>Pay Remit has been submitted to DoF. Current queries are being addressed.</p> <p>DAERA are consulting on their draft Carbon Action Plan. DK asked all Board Members to view this consultation.</p> <p>Proposed Budget for 2023/24</p> <p>2023/24 Budget has been revised in light of first six months trading and was presented to the Board. After a discussion the Board approved amendments. KQ noted this budget was significantly different from previous budget and thanked the Board for their input to these changes.</p> <p>The approved budget will be included in the revised Business Plan to be submitted to DAERA.</p> <p>Estate Management</p> <p>KQ updated the Board on current estate issues.</p> <p>In Portavogie the Princess Anne Road sites have been mapped.</p>	Board

	Action
<p>Solicitors have been provided with copies of these maps in order to commence preparation of the new leases.</p> <p>Aged Debtors</p> <p>Going forward a written commentary will be provided by BMcC to clarify the make up of the older debt balances.</p> <p>Accounts</p> <p>KQ is providing a narrative to the accounts for any material variances and this is proving beneficial.</p>	
<p>6. Audit Risk and Assurance Committee Update</p>	
<p><u>Report Presentation (including Risk Register)</u></p> <p>LG asked for a slight amendment to the minutes of the meeting on 12 Sept 2023.</p> <p>KQ asked could DAERA help on the Raising Concerns Policy. Any concerns raised by a member of staff would raise a conflict within NIFHA and we need to determine at what stage should this be handed over to an external person.</p> <p>Segregation of Duties – DS will liaise with KQ to see what may be needed and if DAERA can provide this assistance.</p> <p>HW covered the report in the absence of KB.</p> <p>Risk Register – August 2023</p> <p>Board discussed the Risk Register. In particular:</p> <p>5 – Failure in the Health and Safety Management System. DS asked for some clarity on the Health and Safety Role within the Authority.</p> <p>KQ discussed this and confirmed that all our HM’s are NEBOSH trained. Our systems are externally audited every 3 years but should the need arise a specialist will be brought in to address any specific issues.</p> <p>Laptops and Security – AMcK has raised issues with regard to email security and this will be addressed outside of the meeting.</p> <p>KQ confirmed that it is NICS policy to supply laptops to Board Members. KQ spoke to the security of information supplied and after a brief discussion the purchase of laptops was approved.</p> <p>DK proposed that the Cyber Security posture be reviewed by an external company. There may be a need to move from Cyber Essentials to Cyber Essentials Plus.</p> <p>BMcC will contact DAERA Cyber Team (who gave a presentation to the Board in December 2022) to ask for their input on this.</p>	<p>BMcC</p> <p>DS / KQ</p> <p>BMcC</p>

	Action
The Risk Register was approved.	
7. Proposed Capital Projects medium term and by 31 Dec 2023	
<p>DL joined the meeting for this Agenda Item. In particular he discussed:</p> <p>Portavogie Cradle Upgrade – Tender has closed with only 1 bid being submitted. Meeting with CPD has been organised for 4 Oct to determine a way to move this project forward. DL discussed the risks associated with this project.</p> <p>Portavogie Bridge Pier Strengthening – Contractor has been on site and works should commence within the next 10 days.</p> <p>Ardglass Solar Panels – Due to commence shortly.</p> <p>Ardglass Fish Market Welfare refurbishment – CPD Property Services have appointed a contractor for these works.</p> <p>Ardglass and Kilkeel Quay Edge Fendering – This is being delivered through the CPD framework contractor. Pricing is being finalised at the moment.</p> <p>Kilkeel Workboat – Funding has been made available and this is moving forward. Tenders are due in 10 days time. There is likely to be a lengthy lead time.</p> <p>DL noted all of these projects have short timescales. The availability of funding was provided at extremely short notice.</p> <p>KQ commended DL for getting these 5 projects up and running in such a short space of time. Our direct contacts within CPD are really working well – issues are further up the chain.</p> <p>KQ and HW attended a meeting in relation to Peace+ funding. £38M is available but allocation seems to be towards 3 – 4 large grant applications. KQ discussed possible ways to access some of this funding and will approach our Environmental Officer (off on maternity leave at the moment) to discuss.</p> <p>HW noted that power supply to the vessels may be within the scope of this funding. The Board discussed possibilities for utilizing some of this funding.</p> <p>DL advised when grant approval is given for a project, a letter of offer is received which we sign agreeing to deliver the project. There would be repercussions from DAERA if we had to hand the committed grant monies back and the money would be completely lost. All the projects are currently on track for completion and full drawdown of grant money.</p>	
8. Environmental Management	
KQ discussed the Environmental Officers Report and noted the following:	

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<p>Carbon Reporting – This is the 1st draft. We now need to look at what others are doing.</p> <p>On one level we are a very simple organisation but we will eventually have to look at the vessels and what they use within our harbours (i.e. Scope 3 emissions)</p> <p>Of the three categories of emissions – Scope 1 and 2 are owned by NIFHA and are directly within our control. Scope 3 emissions are much more difficult to assess as these lie within the Supply Chain and are not directly controlled by NIFHA.</p> <p>LG advised that whilst it was great to have figures a comparator would be needed to know whether we are performing well. KQ is going to Peterhead in October and will establish a contact there.</p> <p>KQ observed that for number 8 in the Environmental Action Plan – improving Application of Waste Hierarchy we have been unable to secure funding to roll out the waste improvement project to Ardglass and Portavogie. Plans have been prepared and should funding be sourced this can proceed quickly.</p> <p>The Primary School Education (number 10) will not proceed this year due to resource issues.</p>	
<p>9. Pay and Grading Business Case</p>	
<p>BMcC left the meeting for this Agenda item.</p> <p>KQ presented the information contained within the Business Case and thanked the Board members for their contributions, especially AMcK and DK.</p> <p>LG pointed out the importance of getting the Business Case approved.</p> <p>DK reinforced to the representatives of DAERA present the critical nature of this Business Case to NIFHA’s ongoing performance and business continuity.</p> <p>DS asked a couple of technical questions re the budget and after a full discussion the board confirmed their approval of the Business Case .</p> <p>Timescales – DS noted it could take 3+ months for the Business Case to get through DAERA and then would have to move to DoF for final approval.</p> <p>DS will forward guidance on the process to KQ and ensure that communication on progress is maintained with NIFHA.</p> <p>KQ will submit the Business Case to DAERA next week.</p>	<p>DS</p> <p>KQ</p>
<p>10. Union Agreement</p>	
<p>After a poll and discussions with all the staff KQ confirmed their wish to have the Union in place.</p>	

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<p>After a discussion the Board agreed to recognise the Union.</p> <p>The next step is to determine the detail of what should be contained in the voluntary agreement. Staff have made it clear to KQ that they only want the Union involved in pay issues, not their terms and conditions.</p> <p>KQ will make contact with the Union.</p> <p>KQ will also need to speak to staff about what is contained within the Pay and Grading Business Case. KQ will update staff next week on the Board decision to recognise the Union. DK stressed the importance of regular communication with the workforce whilst the Business Case is being processed.</p> <p>Unite will be aware of timescales within the public sector for Business Cases to gain approval.</p>	<p>KQ</p> <p>KQ</p>
<p>11. Business Plan 2023-24</p>	
<p>KQ confirmed changes to the budget based on the results for the first six months. Approved at Finance Meeting.</p> <p>DS – commented on the memo he sent which noted issues within the Business Plan, he confirmed the internal process for approval.</p> <p>Business Plan will be reviewed by DS and then is presented to the Departmental Board before being passed to the Permanent Secretary for final approval.</p> <p>The financial pressures on DAERA resulted in approval for the original budget not being given.</p> <p>This revised budget is much more positive reflecting a significantly improved position.</p> <p>KQ spoke to the changes within the Business Plan itself.</p> <p>Outcome 2D – Preparation of a comprehensive estate management strategy will be removed from the final business plan.</p> <p>KQ advised that an issue may arise over the levels of cash required to fund capital projects.</p> <p>There may be the need to open a loan account to fund timing differences between payments and grant claims.</p> <p>DS confirmed that if the Business Plan is approved by DAERA there will be no restrictions on spending the reserves.</p> <p>Business Plan was approved subject to Outcome 2D being changed.</p> <p>KQ will submit revised Business Plan to DAERA.</p>	<p>KQ</p>

	Action
12. NIFHA Quinquennial Review	
<p>DS – this has been paused by DAERA. No funding currently available to carry this out.</p> <p>DH stressed that the fishing industry is experiencing significant changes. The harbours were built circa 100 years ago and the aged infrastructure is no longer fit for purpose. There is still a huge future for the harbours – renewable energy, bigger vessels, the blue economy etc., however the harbour infrastructure needs to facilitate these opportunities.</p>	
13. DAERA/NIFHA Draft Partnership Agreement	
<p>KQ discussed his report on the draft partnership agreement.</p> <p>DS confirmed that sponsorship moving into a central body has resulted in the loss of some of the previous routine contact.</p> <p>KQ – major issue is the time gap between what is being thought about in DAERA and what is in the Public Domain.</p> <p>The Board discussed the draft agreement and DK asked all Board Members to send any comments to KQ before 6 October 2023.</p> <p>The Board agreed that once comments have been received KQ should open negotiations with DAERA to finalise the agreement.</p>	<p>Board</p> <p>KQ</p>
14. Corporate Plan Review	
<p>DK stated that sections of the Corporate Plan need substantial reworking. In particular we need to address:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Customers and Stakeholders - Key Opportunities and Challenges - Vision and Core Values - Return to self funding - Resource Implications and financing - Changes in planning context - Succession Planning / Business Continuity <p>KQ noted we implement government strategy – we do not set this. 85% of what is contained in the Corporate Plan will relate to what we have and how we maintain it.</p> <p>There will be a need to go out to consultation. What do our customers want?</p> <p>An internal workshop needs to be held and KQ will send out a doodle poll to organise a suitable date for this.</p>	<p>KQ</p>

	Action
DS noted it is important to have the right Corporate Plan in place.	
15. Key NIFHA Activities	
<p>KQ discussed the priority activities and updated the Board on progress to date.</p> <p>A lot of time has been spent writing Business Cases.</p> <p>Dredger Re-coding – Ian Darley is trying to progress this with MCA. KQ will check the date on the temp certificate.</p> <p>MCA have issues with boarding boats on our slipways. We are trying to address this.</p>	KQ
16. Schedule of Meetings / Next Meeting Date	
<p>Board asked about a meeting with DAERA Board? When is this likely to take place?</p> <p>After a brief discussion it was decided that this should be deferred until more strategic information is set through the Corporate Plan.</p> <p>Next Committee meetings are scheduled for 23 November 2023 and will be held in Kilkeel Harbour Master Offices.</p> <p>Next Board Meeting will be on Friday 15 December 2023 in Downpatrick.</p>	
17. ANY OTHER BUSINESS	
<p>KQ updated the Board on a Minor Works Project to replace CCTV in Kilkeel and Portavogie. Tender process is complete. This is a health and safety issue - It is both an upgrade and refurbishment. KQ will email everyone details and await approval.</p> <p>HSE have recommended closing access gates in Kilkeel. This will require physical works and may become a future minor works project.</p> <p>DK thanked everyone for attending the meeting.</p> <p>Meeting ended at 2.50pm.</p>	KQ