

INVEST NORTHERN IRELAND BOARD MINUTES 2023

January 25, 2023

March 1, 2023

March 29, 2023

April 26, 2023

May 25, 2023

June 29, 2023

August 24, 2023

September 21, 2023

October 26, 2023

November 30, 2023

**TWO HUNDRED AND FIRST MEETING OF THE
INVEST NORTHERN IRELAND BOARD, 25 JANUARY 2023
MEETING HELD AT INVEST NI HQ**

Present:

Invest NI Board

Rose Mary Stalker (Chair)	Julie-Ann O'Hare
Colin Coffey	Dawn McLaughlin
Marie-Therese McGivern	Dominic Darby
Kieran Kennedy	Scott Ritchie
Kevin Kingston	Melanie Dawson
Michael McQuillan	Patrick O'Gorman
Ciaran Mulgrew	

In Attendance: Mel Chittock, Alan McKeown, Brian Dolaghan, Carolyn McKenna, Donal Durkan, Jeremy Fitch, Peter Harbinson, Steve Harper, Ian Maxwell

Minute Taker: Wendy Savage

The meeting commenced at 1.00pm.

1. APOLOGIES

None received.

1.1 DECLARATION OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND OPENING REMARKS

It was confirmed that the current Register of Interests was up to date and there were no conflicts with any items under discussion today.

1.2 RAISING CONCERNS

Board members were reminded of their obligations under the raising concerns policy and procedures.

A discussion followed regarding the two raising concerns cases mentioned in the Independent Review Report. Members were advised that in both cases work to date shows that there is no substance to the allegations. A Board member advised that DfE would be willing to come along to an upcoming Board meeting to provide further information on these matters.

Action: Board Secretariat to issue an invitation to DfE to join an upcoming Board meeting to provide a closing update on these matters.

1.3 MINUTES

The minutes of the December Board meeting were agreed with one addition and will be published online.

1.4 MATTERS ARISING

The Actions list was reviewed. The following was noted:

Action 4 – Energy Crisis Update – Board members noted the update paper issued to them in early December and asked for a follow up discussion at a future Board meeting.

Action 6 - Board to consider nominating members to sit on a Board Strategy Working Group to support the development of the 2023/24 Business Plan.

2. BOARD STANDING ITEMS

2.1 INNOVATION POLICY & METRICS

Keith Forster, Director of Strategic Policy, DfE, Eoin McFadden, Head of Innovation Strategy Unit, DfE and Vicky Kell, Director, Innovation R&D joined the meeting for this item.

Dom Darby, Board Champion for Innovation and Keith Forster gave a brief introduction to this item. Eoin McFadden then presented on the need to drive increases in Business Expenditure in R&D, Higher Education R&D and Government Expenditure on R&D. Eoin then described the Innovation Framework which will consist of three identified strategic objectives which will be underpinned by policy objectives and other enablers. Eoin concluded his presentation by mentioning the 2023/24 DfE delivery plan and the need for co-design of actions for the 10X innovation workstream.

Jeremy Fitch then presented on R&D key measures and regional spread and our progress against them, and updated Board members on progress against Innovation targets for 2022/23.

There was a brief discussion, with the main points summarised below:

- Board members asked for comparative data with other regions.
- Innovate NI discussed – Should this business tool be integrated with all of our products and services?
- There is a need to refresh the Innovation Escalator to include Innovation Driven Enterprises.
- More work needed to decide how innovation is defined and how companies understand it
- How is the impact on targets measured?
- More crossover with other Departments and strategies required

The Chief Executive stated that we need to understand how the numbers are translated to activities to help shape the organisation moving forward.

The Chair thanked the team for their presentation, welcomed the co-design and alignment with the Department, acknowledged the challenges and opportunities and encouraged the team to come back to Board to report on future progress when appropriate.

Keith, Eoin and Vicky left the meeting.

2.2 FINANCE REPORT TO BOARD

Brian Dolaghan provided a brief update to supplement the Finance Report to Board. A question was asked as to what the impact on the forecast outturn for the payroll budget is given that the recent NICS pay offer is less than what was being budgeted for. Brian reported that there will be an easement of circa £0.9m as a result of forecast leavers, timing of recruitments, and reversing of the increase in national insurance. The finance team are actively monitoring this.

A further question was asked regarding how inflation is forecast. Mel reported that inflation has more limited budgetary impact, given that the majority of Invest NI committed expenditure is grant related and therefore not affected by inflation.

2.3 GOVERNANCE COUNCIL ACTION PLAN UPDATE

Paper was noted. In the Independent Review there was a finding stating that responsibilities between ARC, Governance Council and Internal Audit Committee were unclear, and that Board governance responsibilities cannot be delegated or replaced by executive committees. The Chief Executive stated that he was disappointed with this finding. The Board reiterated that the Governance Council was an initiative led by Management as the first line of defence in the organisation. It exists to help Management improve both the internal controls in the organisation and the execution of risk and control procedures on a day-to-day basis. There has been no delegation of governance responsibilities. ARC has oversight of the Governance Council activities and commented that they were content with the progress and achievements of the Governance Council.

3. MONTHLY REPORTING TO BOARD BY EXCEPTION & PAPERS TO NOTE

3.1 CEO REPORT

Paper was noted. There was a brief discussion in relation to training grants, particularly to larger companies, and how the return on investment is measured. An ELT member reported

that training support is not provided for professional qualifications but aimed at increasing management capability.

There was also a brief discussion on productivity and members were advised that there would be an update available for February's Board meeting.

Action: Update on productivity to be provided for the February Board meeting/Strategy Day.

3.2 STATUS REPORT – STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Paper was noted.

3.3 MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

Paper was noted.

3.4 CASEWORK REPORT

Paper was noted

3.5 NI-CO UPDATE

Paper was noted. The feedback from the Board was that the recommendations in the paper were incomplete with outstanding actions to be brought back to Board. Members acknowledged that the Board must be consulted before any recommendation is agreed.

Action: An update on NI-CO to be provided for the next Board meeting.

4. SCHEDULE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Colin Coffey gave members a brief verbal update on discussions to date regarding shifting the emphasis to Board Committees to help make the running of Board meetings more efficient.

Colin advised that he wanted to bring a proposal back to Board for discussion and agreement. Board members suggested this might be better dealt with by way of a topic for discussion at February's Strategy Day.

Action: Further discussion to be tabled as part of the agenda for February Strategy Day.

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

5.1 CHAIR'S BUSINESS

The Chair advised that Colin Coffey has now been appointed as the Senior Independent Director. Board members discussed the role and the additional responsibilities attached to this position.

The Chair advised that the process to appoint a Deputy Chair would be covered during the later Non-Executive Director session.

The Chair confirmed the Board had agreed the principles of the Board Effectiveness Review Report and referenced the action plan, acknowledging and thanking everyone for their contribution for the huge amount of work undertaken to date.

5.2 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Julie-Ann O'Hare and Donal Durkan provided an update on City & Growth Deals for members.

ELT members, apart from the CEO and Board Secretariat, left the meeting at this point.

6. INDEPENDENT REVIEW – ACTION PLAN / NEXT STEPS

The Chief Executive presented to the Board his thoughts on the next steps in response to the Independent Review findings. There was a discussion on the way forward.

The meeting ended at 5.30pm.

7. DATE OF THE NEXT BOARD MEETING

The next Board meeting will be on Wednesday 1st March 2023.

Wendy Savage, January 2023

Chair

**TWO HUNDRED AND SECOND MEETING OF THE
INVEST NORTHERN IRELAND BOARD, 1 MARCH 2023
MEETING HELD AT INVEST NI HQ**

Present:

Invest NI Board

Colm McKenna (Interim Chair)	Julie-Ann O'Hare
Colin Coffey	Dawn McLaughlin
Marie-Therese McGivern	Dominic Darby
Kieran Kennedy	Scott Ritchie
Kevin Kingston	Melanie Dawson
Michael McQuillan	Patrick O'Gorman
Ciaran Mulgrew	

In Attendance: Mel Chittock, Alan McKeown, Brian Dolaghan, Carolyn McKenna, Donal Durkan, Jeremy Fitch, Peter Harbinson, Steve Harper, Ian Maxwell

Minute Taker: Wendy Savage

The meeting commenced at 2.30pm.

OPENING REMARKS

The interim Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave members a brief background on his previous roles.

The interim Chair on behalf of the Board, thanked the previous Chair Rose Mary Stalker for her leadership, dedication and commitment as both a Board member and most recently as Chair of Invest Northern Ireland.

1. APOLOGIES

None received.

1.1 DECLARATION OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND OPENING REMARKS

It was confirmed that the current Register of Interests was up to date and there were no conflicts with any items under discussion today.

1.2 RAISING CONCERNS

Board members were reminded of their obligations under the raising concerns policy and procedures.

1.3 MINUTES

The minutes of the January Board meeting were agreed with one amendment and will be published online.

1.4 MATTERS ARISING

The Actions list was reviewed. The following was noted:

Action 4 – Update from Head of Green Economy to be scheduled for the March Board meeting

Action 5 – Discussion on assistance to companies to be schedule for an upcoming Board meeting

Action 9 – Work progressing on “Data Rooms” – due date 31st March

2. BOARD STANDING ITEMS

2.1 CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT TO BOARD

The Chief Executive provided a brief update to supplement the CEO Report to Board.

Mel advised that the latest Labour Force Survey estimates indicated that the unemployment rate for October-December 2022 decreased by 0.5 percentage points over the quarter to 2.5%. The employment rate (71.9%) increased over the quarter by 1.8 percentage points, whilst the economic inactivity rate (26.3%) decreased by 1.5 percentage points over the quarter.

Mel then provided a brief update on performance to date – further detail will be provided for the March Board meeting. Mel then referenced the ongoing discussions on budget and the need to be mindful of the budget landscape in terms of making major commitments.

Mel finished his report by providing an update on meetings attended including those with the Business Alliance and Retail NI.

A Board member asked if ELT are content with the number of desk bookings by staff and if we have a hybrid working policy in place. The Chief Executive gave a brief update on the policy and advised plans are progressing on updates to the layout of the building.

2.2 FINANCE REPORT TO BOARD

Brian Dolaghan provided a brief update to supplement the Finance Report to Board. Key headlines are summarised below:

- Update on current year Budget Spend Analysis provided
- Update on future look for 2023/24 provided – reminder that there is a multi-year dimension to business expenditure
- Dependent on budget settlement, and any potential reductions, planning ongoing in conjunction with DfE

Brian Dolaghan briefly left the meeting

2.3 ARC UPDATE

The ARC Chair provided a brief update from the latest ARC meeting. Key headlines are summarised below:

- External Audit Strategy – timetable agreed
- Internal Audit Update and Audit Plan 2023-24 agreed
- Fraud and Raising Concerns – update provided
- Brief discussion on recommendations arising from Independent Review

Brian Dolaghan returned to the meeting.

3. NI-CO UPDATE

Alan McKeown referred members to the update paper provided in the Board pack. A business case was received from NI-CO in December, for Invest NI consideration, on the future options for the company. The Invest NI Business Appraisal team conducted a review of the business case and concluded that the preferred option did not demonstrate viability and value for money. The Chief Executive has written to NI-CO requesting that an option for early closure of the company be modelled in the business case, and to consider the appointment of an external adviser. Ongoing updates will be provided to the Board.

4. MONTHLY REPORTING TO BOARD BY EXCEPTION & PAPERS TO NOTE

4.1 STATUS REPORT – STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Paper was noted with no comments.

4.2 MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

Paper was noted.

Brief discussion on the role of the Board in the upcoming Staff Conference.

Update provided to members on potential investment conference.

4.3 CASEWORK REPORT

Paper was noted with no comments.

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

5.1 CHAIR'S BUSINESS

Nothing raised under this item.

5.2 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

A Board member asked about carbon emissions at Invest NI HQ and what plans are in place to reduce them. The Chief Executive advised that the carbon footprint is reported in the Annual Report. An ELT member also advised that there is a project team working on ideas to reduce carbon emissions.

Julie-Ann O'Hare and Donal Durkan provided an update on City & Growth Deals for members.

The meeting ended at 4.20pm.

7. DATE OF THE NEXT BOARD MEETING

The next Board meeting will be on Wednesday 29th March 2023.

Wendy Savage, March 2023

Chair

**TWO HUNDRED AND THIRD MEETING OF THE
INVEST NORTHERN IRELAND BOARD, 29 MARCH 2023
MEETING HELD AT INVEST NI HQ**

Present:

Invest NI Board

Colm McKenna (Interim Chair)	Julie-Ann O'Hare
Colin Coffey	Dawn McLaughlin
Marie-Therese McGivern	Dominic Darby
Kieran Kennedy	Scott Ritchie
Kevin Kingston	Melanie Dawson
Michael McQuillan	Patrick O'Gorman
Ciaran Mulgrew	

In Attendance: Mel Chittock, Alan McKeown, Brian Dolaghan, Carolyn McKenna, Donal Durkan, Jeremy Fitch, Peter Harbinson, Steve Harper

Minute Taker: Wendy Savage

The meeting commenced at 10.30am.

1. APOLOGIES

None received.

1.1 DECLARATION OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND OPENING REMARKS

INVEST NI BOARD MEETING MINUTES

It was confirmed that the current Register of Interests was up to date and there were no conflicts with any items under discussion today.

Melanie Dawson made members aware that she has approached Invest NI for sponsorship of the upcoming Digital Construction Live event. Invest NI has sponsored this event previously and Board members were supportive of the request and content that this did not present a conflict.

1.2 RAISING CONCERNS

Board members were reminded of their obligations under the raising concerns policy and procedures.

1.3 MINUTES

The minutes of the February Board meeting were agreed and will be published online.

1.4 MATTERS ARISING

The Actions list was reviewed. The following was noted:

Action 5 – Discussion on assistance to companies to be scheduled for an upcoming Board meeting. Board Secretariat to confirm date.

2. BOARD STANDING ITEMS

2.1 CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT TO BOARD

The Chief Executive provided a brief update to supplement the CEO Report to Board.

Mel advised that Economic measures still look positive in respect of movements in unemployment for NI at 2.4% compared to 3.7% across the UK. For NI, this is a reduction of 0.4% over the quarter.

Economic inactivity levels fell by 1.5% over the same period to 26.3% which is welcome news, although this is still much higher than the UK average at 21.3%.

At the same time the latest data shows employment rates increased slightly over the quarter, and for the year is up by 3.1% to 71.8%.

Mel then provided a brief update on his recent trip to Washington and more specifically his meeting with Joe Kennedy, the US Economic Envoy to Northern Ireland.

Mel completed his update by giving a brief update on the ongoing work on the Independent Review.

The Chair asked how work on an updated proposal on casework was progressing. Mel advised that a new proposal was almost ready to come to Board.

Action: Economically Inactive - Paper to be produced for Board on where Invest NI sits in this space

Action: Casework Committees - Updated draft of proposal paper almost complete. Will come back to Board when signed off by ELT. Formal reporting mechanism also to be considered

2.2 FINANCE REPORT TO BOARD

Brian Dolaghan provided an update to supplement the Finance Report to Board. Key headlines are summarised below:

- Update on current year Budget Spend Analysis provided – Finance team working with colleagues across the organisation to deliver year-end expenditure within permitted budget spend tolerances

- Update on future potential organisational implications of indicative budget allocation for 2023/24 and the need to ensure any draft operating plan for the year reflected the activity/investment impact of possible reductions

There followed a discussion during which the Board expressed their concern regarding the impact of potential cuts and impressed upon the Executive team to ensure that all aspects of the business were considered when evaluating planning scenarios. All such considerations were to be set in the context of the need to deliver efficiently and effectively on the 10x economic ambitions but recognising that difficult decisions would have to be made with regard to all aspects of the organisation's service delivery. The Board emphasised that all aspects of the business should be subject to such review and challenge including the nature and scale of services delivered and the associated personnel requirements. There was also a discussion on how Invest NI measures value to the economy and how there may be opportunities to increase return on investment within a tighter budget landscape, and whether programme efficiencies can be realised.

2.3 INVEST NI REVIEW DELIVERY STEERING GROUP UPDATE

Steering Group members provided an update on progress to date and advised on next steps.

3. BUSINESS PLAN 2023/24 UPDATE

Gerard McNally joined the meeting for this item. Members thanked Gerard for the amount of work undertaken to date and provided feedback on the latest draft of the plan.

The Chair asked that the updated Business Plan be discussed in further detail at the April Board meeting.

Action: Updated draft to be circulated to members in advance of April Board meeting

Gerard McNally left the meeting.

4. MONTHLY REPORTING TO BOARD BY EXCEPTION & PAPERS TO NOTE

4.1 STATUS REPORT – STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Paper was noted with no comments.

4.2 MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

Paper was noted with no comments.

There was a brief discussion on staff feedback following the Staff Conference and members felt that wider pulse surveying should be reinstated.

Members were advised that staff had taken part in Employee Forum sessions last Summer.

The Chair stated that a Culture evaluation should be considered as a matter of urgency and asked the Executive Director, People and Culture to take this forward.

Action: Consideration to be given to re-engaging with staff pulse surveys and request from Chair that Culture evaluation be considered.

Patrick O’Gorman left the meeting.

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

5.1 CHAIR’S BUSINESS

Nothing raised under this item.

5.2 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Julie-Ann O'Hare and Donal Durkan provided an update on City & Growth Deals for members.

The Chair of ARC passed on her thanks and appreciation to Kevin Kingston on behalf of ARC as he retires from the Board of Invest NI at the end of March. The ARC Chair noted Kevin's professionalism, integrity and diligence as both a member of the Board, and as Chair of ARC.

The Chair echoed the comments and described Kevin as a model Board member who had had a huge impact and influence within the organisation.

Scott Ritchie left the meeting.

Kevin thanked the Board for their support and friendship over the past three years and stated that he could see huge opportunities for the organisation moving forward if embraced.

The meeting ended at 12.55pm.

6. DATE OF THE NEXT BOARD MEETING

The next Board meeting will be on Wednesday 26th April 2023.

Wendy Savage, March 2023

Chair

**TWO HUNDRED AND FOURTH MEETING OF THE
INVEST NORTHERN IRELAND BOARD, 26 APRIL 2023
MEETING HELD AT INVEST NI HQ**

Present:

Invest NI Board

Colm McKenna (Interim Chair)

Julie-Ann O'Hare

Colin Coffey

Dawn McLaughlin

Marie-Therese McGivern

Melanie Dawson

Kieran Kennedy

Scott Ritchie

Michael McQuillan

Ciaran Mulgrew

Board Secretary: Trevor Connolly

In Attendance: Mel Chittock, Alan McKeown, Brian Dolaghan, Carolyn McKenna, Donal Durkan, Jeremy Fitch, Peter Harbinson, Steve Harper.

Minute Taker: Wendy Savage

The meeting commenced at 10.15am.

The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming our new Board Secretary, Trevor Connolly, who will report directly to the Chair.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies received from Patrick O'Gorman and Dominic Darby.

1.1 DECLARATION OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND OPENING REMARKS

It was confirmed that the current Register of Interests was up to date and there were no conflicts with any items under discussion today.

1.2 RAISING CONCERNS

Board members were reminded of their obligations under the raising concerns policy and procedures.

1.3 MINUTES

A Board member raised concerns that the Board's detailed discussion in respect of the March Finance Report was not properly reflected in the minutes. Minutes to be updated and draft shared with all Board members for agreement.

Action: The minutes of the March Board meeting are to be amended in respect of the Finance Report to Board and once agreed will be published online.

1.4 MATTERS ARISING

The Actions list was reviewed. The following was noted:

Action 5 – Discussion on assistance to large companies to be scheduled for June Board meeting.

Action 13 – Raising Concerns – internal policy to be checked to give assurance it is aligned to new policy recently published by Department for Finance.

Action 20 – Casework Process – The Chief Executive advised that the paper due to be circulated was not yet finalised but would be ready for the May Board meeting.

Updated Action: Paper will be provided for the May Board meeting and item added for discussion.

Action 24 – Staff Survey and Cultural Evaluation – Chair will discuss with the People & Culture Executive Director.

Paper will be provided for the June Board meeting and item added for discussion.

2. BOARD STANDING ITEMS

2.1 CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT TO BOARD

The Chief Executive provided a brief update to supplement the CEO Report to Board.

Mel provided some brief economic commentary referencing the continuing high rate of inflation.

The economic inactivity rate has decreased by 2.2% over the year to 26.2%.

The employment rate increased by 0.6% over the quarter and increased by 2.6% over the year to 71.9%.

Mel provided a brief update on some high-profile meetings in the last month and expressed his disappointment that Invest NI has not been invited to participate in QUB's GFA 25 events, especially on discussions regarding inward investment.

Mel then referenced the Investment Summit, which will take in place in September 2023 and advised planning is progressing in partnership with the Department of International Trade, the Northern Ireland Office and the Department for the Economy.

Action: All relevant information regarding potential invitees and Board participation to be sent to Board members as planning progresses.

Mel completed his update by giving a brief update on the ongoing work on the Independent Review and the populating of the new Task and Finish groups.

A Board member raised a query on the reference to the Ambition to Grow pilot in the Chief Executive's written report regarding the feedback from Board members and the lessons learned following the initial pilot scheme. The Board member sought assurance that previous points raised had been incorporated and whether the imminent launch date for an enhanced pilot scheme was appropriate.

The Chair also sought assurance that the Board feedback and lessons learned from the initial pilot phase had all been actioned in the process for the next call and the team was confident that the launch date was not too soon and if needs be, could be postponed.

An ELT member advised that the team is confident that the learnings had been taken on board and agreed to provide Board members with an update paper providing assurance on the issues raised and a chance to provide further feedback prior to going ahead with the next call.

Action: Written update to be sent to Board members with a due date for comments of 1st May

2.2 FINANCE REPORT TO BOARD

Brian Dolaghan provided a brief update to supplement the Finance Report to Board. Key headlines are summarised below:

- The draft provisional outturn was discussed – outturn should be within allowable tolerance.
- The Finance team continues to work through current and future year projections based on indicative budget figures.

The Chair asked if year on year spend has fallen over the last three years, and if so by how much. Brian Dolaghan responded and agreed to provide further written analysis for the next Finance Report to Board.

Action: Analysis and tables showing movement in final outturn over last 3 years and explanation as to cause and correlation, to be included in May Finance Report.

A Board member asked how the draft Business Plan will deal with what could be a substantial budget cut and what ELT's understanding is of the likely opening budget position. The Chair asked if any scenario planning had been completed by the Finance team. There was concern expressed by a Board member that there has been nothing shared with the Board on discussions on any restructuring plans to meet the budget cut as well as any plans to reduce services to customers.

Brian Dolaghan confirmed that no scenario planning had been undertaken.

The Chair also asked that on the first instance, all non-essential recruitment be halted.

The Chief Executive responded by advising that as priorities dictate, staff had been redeployed to work where required and was content to confirm that all non-essential recruitment would be halted.

2.3 INVEST NI REVIEW DELIVERY STEERING GROUP UPDATE

Steering Group members provided an update on progress to date and advised on next steps. To keep all Board members informed it was agreed that the Board Secretary will circulate Steering Group minutes on a regular basis.

3. BUSINESS PLAN 2023/24 UPDATE

Donal Durkan updated the Board on the latest version of the draft Business Plan and asked Board for any final feedback before sign-off.

Following detailed discussion around measurement of investment and return, productivity measures, sub-regionality and place, ambition and targets and potential budget implications the Board agreed the draft Business Plan, as presented, with an acknowledgement that this is a one-year transition plan which will need to be agile and flexible to the changing economic landscape.

4. BOARD COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

Colin Coffey presented members with a proposal for new three Board Committees and membership and asked for Board agreement to stand up said Committees as proposed, with a formal review of functions and membership to take place in September 2023.

Board members queried where casework would sit within the new structure. The Chair stated that this would be decided once the ELT casework paper had been presented and signed off. An ELT member also asked that the roles and responsibilities of executive attendees be considered in the setting up of the Committees. The Chair confirmed that the Committees will not be considering operational matters but are strategic.

A Board member asked that Entrepreneurship be added to the Regional & Partnerships Committee.

The Board accepted the proposal in principle and Chairs of the new Committees are to draft the new ToR, supported by the Board Secretary, and work with the Board Secretariat to set up initial meetings.

Action: Committees led by their respective Chairs to draft ToR for new Board Committees and initial meetings to be organised. Committee Chairs to provide verbal update on progress at May Board meeting.

Colin Coffey also presented a draft Forward Board Planner for consideration. Following a short discussion, the Forward Planner was agreed in principle, with the understanding that items for discussion may change as the Planner is developed. There was a short discussion around the timing of a future Strategy Day, with Board Secretariat to look at potential dates in September/October.

Action: Date to be confirmed for separate strategy day/s in September/October.

5. MONTHLY REPORTING TO BOARD BY EXCEPTION & PAPERS TO NOTE

5.1 MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

Paper was noted with no comments.

5.2 CASEWORK REPORT

Paper was noted with no comments.

5.3 ECONOMIC INACTIVITY UPDATE REPORT

There was a brief discussion on the content so this paper with the conclusion that the topic needs further discussion in defining what Invest NI's role to play is. It was highlighted that Invest NI does not 'own' the area of economic inactivity and that both DfC and DfE were key players in this complex and complicated arena. Board members asked for further data comparing us with other GB regions, NI and Rol.

Action: Item for discussion will be added to the Forward planner.

Action: Chair asked for further information showing how economic inactivity is measured across the 12 economic regions of GB, ROI and NI to be shared with Board members.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

6.1 CHAIR'S BUSINESS

The Chair re-iterated his request on ambition to grow (referenced in 2.1 above).

The Chair also requested that a paper be prepared on how we could measure our non-financial support to business.

Action: Outline paper to be prepared setting out options to capture our non-financial support to businesses.

6.2 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Julie-Ann O'Hare and Donal Durkan provided an update on City & Growth Deals for members.

Members were advised that there are several relay teams taking part in the Belfast Marathon to raise funds for our Corporate Charity and donations could be made via the Just Giving page.

The meeting ended at 12.55pm.

7. DATE OF THE NEXT BOARD MEETING

The next Board meeting will be on Thursday 25th May 2023 and held in Derry/Londonderry.

Wendy Savage, April 2023

Chair

**TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTH MEETING OF THE
INVEST NORTHERN IRELAND BOARD, 25 MAY 2023
MEETING HELD AT ULSTER UNIVERSITY, MAGEE CAMPUS**

Present:

Invest NI Board

Colm McKenna (Interim Chair)	Julie-Ann O'Hare
Dominic Darby	Dawn McLaughlin
Marie-Therese McGivern	Melanie Dawson
Kieran Kennedy	Scott Ritchie
Michael McQuillan	Patrick O'Gorman
Ciaran Mulgrew	

Board Secretary: Trevor Connolly

In Attendance: Mel Chittock, Alan McKeown, Brian Dolaghan, Donal Durkan, Jeremy Fitch, Peter Harbinson, Steve Harper.

Minute Taker: Wendy Savage

The meeting commenced at 10.15am.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies received from Colin Coffey and Carolyn McKenna.

1.1 DECLARATION OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

INVEST NI BOARD MEETING MINUTES

It was confirmed that the current Register of Interests was up to date and there were no conflicts with any items under discussion today.

1.2 RAISING CONCERNS

Board members were reminded of their obligations under the raising concerns policy and procedures.

1.3 MINUTES

The minutes of the April Board meeting were agreed and will be published online.

1.4 MATTERS ARISING

The Actions list was reviewed. The following was noted:

Action 24 – Staff Survey and Cultural Evaluation – Employee Voice Forum work undertaken in October/November 2022. Chief Executive to provide 1 page update on actions from the forum for the next Board meeting and staff briefing video to be forwarded to Board members.

Action: Staff briefing video to be issued to Board members by Board Secretariat and viewed before June Board meeting.

Action: Chief Executive to provide 1 page paper to June Board which details (i) all the actions which were agreed, (ii) those actions which have already been implemented - by whom and when (iii) those actions which are still to be progressed - by whom and when.

Action 40 – Non-Financial interventions - following discussion, the Chair has agreed that the above Outline paper will be included in the August Board pack, following on from the work being taken on by the related Task & Finish Group.

Action: Outline paper to be provided for August Board pack.

2. BOARD STANDING ITEMS

2.1 CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT TO BOARD

The Chief Executive provided a brief update to supplement the CEO Report to Board. Mel provided some brief economic commentary referencing the unemployment rates and economic inactivity. The Labour Force Survey (LFS) estimates indicate that the unemployment rate for January-March 2023 was unchanged over the quarter at 2.5%. The employment rate (72.0%) increased over the quarter by 0.1 percentage points, whilst the economic inactivity rate (26.1%) decreased by 0.1 percentage points over the quarter. Over the year there was an increase of 1.5% over the year to April 2023, where pay rolled employees are now 4.3% above pre-COVID levels.

Mel briefly mentioned the INI 2023-24 Budget allocation but stated this would be discussed in more details later in the meeting.

Mel touched briefly on 10X and advised that, with the allocation of draft budgets, DfE is now moving to publish their 10X delivery plans.

In respect of 10X, Mel advised that inputs were sought from ALB's in January 2023 and all Programmes, Initiatives and Schemes were mapped against the 3 Pillars of Innovation, Inclusivity & Sustainability. Mel also highlighted that the 'Sustainability' strand of the Delivery Plan notes the intention to explore conditionality of funding and strengthen guidance over 2023/24.

Mel concluded by advising that there is still a need to develop Tier 3, 'Project Specific' metrics, which Invest NI will progress and agree with DfE.

A Board member referenced feedback received from agri-food companies and the need for sectoral adjustments. This will be discussed further offline.

Mel then referred to prioritisation and offered to provide updated briefing to Board members to be included in the June Board pack.

Action: Chief Executive to provide separate Paper for June Board on latest position regarding the process being undertaken by ELT when prioritising the allocation of funding to programmes and projects.

Mel provided a brief update on Shared Island Funding, following a recent meeting involving Invest NI, Enterprise NI, InterTradeIreland and DfE who met with the Department for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Dept of An Taoiseach Shared Island Unit to discuss Shared Island Fund opportunities. The fund is worth up to €1bn by the end of the decade, with an immediate opportunity for the partnership of a pot of up to €50m. Board members asked for further updates regarding Shared Island Funding opportunities.

Action: Chief Executive to include specific briefing within CEO Report for June Board on Shared Island Funding.

Mel concluded his report by referencing the offer activity data issued to Board members following a request at the April Board meeting.

Action: Chief Executive advised that a further discussion regarding data provided on Offer Activity is warranted. Chair to consider and if content this will be added to Board Forward Planner. It has been agreed that a presentation addressing this issue, together with Large Company Assistance, will be presented at the June Board meeting.

A Board member highlighted the potential for pension funds to invest directly into NI businesses and/or NI investment funds with NILGOSC (NI Local Government Officers Superannuation Committee) being a prime example. It was agreed that this was an important potential opportunity which would be taken forward by the Business Funding Committee.

The Chair asked for further information regarding the update on portfolio of programmes within the CEO Report. The Chief Executive stated that the work was commissioned to collate and manage programmes into a common terminology and was purely for information. Further work is now being completed to quantify our programmes.

2.2 FINANCE REPORT TO BOARD

Brian Dolaghan made a brief presentation to supplement the Finance Report to Board. Key headlines are summarised below:

- The draft provisional outturn was discussed - year-end accounting adjustments completed, and provisional outturn submitted to DfE, within allowable tolerance.
- As previously indicated, the opening budget for 2023/24 is a flat allocation based on the 2022/23 closing position. While the budget is therefore unchanged from last year's closing budget, it does represent a £16m (17%) cut to 2022/23 opening position and the expected 2023/24 opening baseline position
- Modelling work has been completed on the percentage cuts to resource allocation.

Brian provided further information on proposed actions to manage the draft capital budget settlement, with specific examples based on the strategic drivers and impacts on leveraged investment.

Action: Capital Budget allocation 2023-24. Chair asked Brian Dolaghan to provide urgent briefing showing how the potential 2023-24 capital budget reductions were arrived at, the underlying assumptions being made and the real-life impact, on related leveraged investment by NI companies.

2.3 ARAC UPDATE

The ARAC Chair provided a brief update which is summarised below:

- Internal Audit - The overall audit opinion for 2022-23 is 'Satisfactory' .
- External Audit – Finance team working to provide information requested with an acknowledgement of the complexity of Invest NI accounts and the tight timeframes for completion of work.
- ARAC Chair flagged potential risk and requested staffing be reviewed urgently in light of the current pressures placed on the team.
- Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) will be renamed as Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) moving forward.

- The Risk Register has been reconfigured because of a review undertaken by the Risk and Assurance Team and feedback received from ELT. The result is a more succinct listing of the risks currently facing the organisation that reflects the impact of the Independent Review

Action: Chair asked to see the extant Risk Appetite statement. Brian Dolaghan to circulate this to Board members.

Action: Chair asked the CEO for a Paper for the June Board setting out: (i) currently, how often is the Corporate Risk Register formally assessed by the Board; (ii) extant INI Risk Appetite statement - when was it developed and shared with the INI Board, and how is it communicated to INI staff.

2.4 INVEST NI REVIEW DELIVERY STEERING GROUP UPDATE

Steering Group members provided an update on progress to date and advised that the last Steering Group meeting focused on reviewing in detail the Problem Statements for each Task & Finish group.

2.5 BOARD COMMITTEE CHAIR UPDATES

Terms of Reference progressing for each Committee. Committee Chairs will provide monthly updates to Board until Committees are formally constituted.

3. BOARD CASEWORK PROCESS

A paper with the proposed new process for Board casework approval was provided as part of the May Board pack. Alan McKeown thanked the Chair for his support and guidance on the drafting of the paper and the Board Secretary for his advice on procedure and stated he was happy to take any questions on the proposal.

A discussion followed whereby some Board members felt the proposed process now provided clarity, however, there was a statement from some that the paper needed further refinement. The following concerns were expressed: (i) the potential number of caseworks for one Committee to review; (ii) whether the Strategic Resources Committee would be overburdened, if it were to take on casework; and (iii) the need for a succinct way of communicating the ask between the Senior Executive Casework Committee (SECC) and the corresponding Board Committee who will be responsible for recommending approval of the case to the Board, with any submission being an absolute maximum of 30 pages in length.

The Chief Executive and other ELT members stated that there are a number of projects ready to proceed where Board approval is required and asked how these should be dealt with in the interim. The Chair gave an undertaking on behalf of the Board to provide clarity as soon as possible and to provide support to get projects progressed and stated that the primary aim was to ensure good customer service.

Action: Meeting to be organised for Invest NI Chair, with Committee Chairs and Board Secretary for week commencing 5th June to discuss and provide clarity and direction on this issue.

4. MONTHLY REPORTING TO BOARD BY EXCEPTION & PAPERS TO NOTE

4.1 MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

Paper was noted. There was a brief discussion about the upcoming Investment Summit and ELT members provided the Board with assurances that they will be kept informed at all stages of the planning.

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

5.1 CHAIR'S BUSINESS

Nothing raised under this item.

5.2 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Julie-Ann O'Hare and Donal Durkan provided an update on City & Growth Deals for members.

Melanie Dawson, as Board advocate for Diversity and Inclusion requested the Board's approval for Invest NI to change its logo to rainbow colours for Pride Week. The Board approved this unanimously.

A member of the Invest NI Delivery Steering Group advised that DfE had commended the level of engagement from Invest NI staff on the Task and Finish groups.

The meeting ended at 12.35pm.

6. DATE OF THE NEXT BOARD MEETING

The next Board meeting will be on Thursday 29th June 2023 (10.15am – 4.15pm) and held at Invest NI HQ, Belfast.

Wendy Savage, May 2023

Chair

**TWO HUNDRED AND SIXTH MEETING OF THE
INVEST NORTHERN IRELAND BOARD, 29 JUNE 2023
MEETING HELD AT INVEST NI HQ**

Present:

Invest NI Board

Colm McKenna (Interim Chair)	Patrick O’Gorman
Colin Coffey	Julie-Ann O’Hare
Dominic Darby (virtual)	Dawn McLaughlin
Marie-Therese McGivern	Melanie Dawson
Kieran Kennedy	Scott Ritchie
Michael McQuillan	Ciaran Mulgrew

Board Secretary: Trevor Connolly

In Attendance: Mel Chittock, Alan McKeown, Brian Dolaghan, Carolyn McKenna, Donal Durkan, Jeremy Fitch, Peter Harbinson.

Minute Taker: Wendy Savage

The meeting commenced at 10.15am. The Chair opened the meeting by advising that several Board members would need to step out of the meeting at various points, which would be noted in the minutes and that he also needed to leave the meeting and return; but had asked Michael McQuillan to step in and chair the meeting during his absence.

1. APOLOGIES

Apology received from Steve Harper.

(i) DECLARATION OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Dawn McLaughlin asked that Institute of Directors be added to her register of interests and Dominic Darby confirmed a change to his employment status regarding Around Noon. It was confirmed that there were no conflicts with any items under discussion today.

(ii) RAISING CONCERNS

Board members were reminded of their obligations under the raising concerns policy and procedures.

1.1 ACCOUNTS 2022/23

The ARAC Chair advised that, due to an issue in respect of NI-CO this item will be deferred until the August Board meeting, when ARAC hopes to be in a position to recommend approval of the Accounts. The Chief Executive provided an update on the NI-CO discussions.

Action: CEO to provide verbal update at August Board meeting on latest position with NI-CO.

1.2 ARAC UPDATE

The ARAC Chair also advised that whilst it is the practice to lay the Accounts before the summer recess, this is not a legal requirement, and the Finance team will continue to work through outstanding issues with a view to finalising in time for the August Board meeting.

1.3 MINUTES

The minutes of the May Board meeting were agreed and will be published online.

1.4 MATTERS ARISING

The Actions list was reviewed. The following was noted:

Action 13 – Raising Concerns – Board Secretary to obtain an update from the Risk Manager.

Marie-Therese McGivern left the meeting temporarily.

2. BOARD STANDING ITEMS

2.1 INVEST NI REVIEW DELIVERY STEERING GROUP UPDATE

Dominic Darby provided an update on discussion at the last Steering Group meeting which is summarised below:

- INI purpose / strategic intent has been a challenge for some groups to understand.
- Agreement that Board and ELT should discuss and agree a Vision statement as an output of the June Board meeting.
- Meeting focused on reviewing in detail the Solution statements for the Task & Finish groups.
- Similar to problem statements, some groups have focussed on action plans not on a “What good looks like” solution statement.

Kieran Kennedy added that he has been impressed with the level of partnership working on the Task & Finish groups between DfE and Invest NI.

Melanie Dawson and Dominic Darby both left the meeting temporarily.

2.2 CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT TO BOARD

The Chief Executive provided a brief update to supplement the CEO Report to Board. Mel advised that economic measures still look positive in respect of unemployment for NI at 2.4% over the quarter (Feb to April) compared to 3.7% across the UK. The Labour Force Survey (LFS) estimates indicate that the unemployment rate has fallen marginally over the year. Mel also stated that high rates of inflation, increasing interest rates and uncertainty on the global outlook make it difficult to forecast the direction of travel for the NI economy. Mel also referenced the upcoming agenda item about activity levels across the previous ten years and stated that consideration should be given to what we should be doing to effect the economic changes that we desire in line with 10X delivery. With the allocation of draft budgets. DfE is now moving to publish their 10X delivery plan. Mel gave a brief update on the announcement of the Biopax project. When asked by the Chair, Mel confirmed that Project Harland was affordable. Board members asked for an update on the impact of potentially funding proposed

major projects on future headroom and how any potential investment equates to a proportion of total budget spend.

Action: Paper setting out the budget impact of proposed major projects to be prepared and circulated to Board members.

There was also a brief discussion around Board members' request for a common internal metric to use when comparing different potential investment decisions to assess where best to support business.

Mel then updated the Board on his attendance at meetings with Derry City & Strabane Council, the Derry Chamber of Commerce and a meeting with Lord Johnson and Jayne Brady regarding planning of the upcoming Investment Summit. Mel concluded his update by highlighting the publication of Invest NI's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), which indicated that Invest NI supported businesses showing increases across all KPIs, with External Sales surpassing £20bn for the first time.

The Chair asked if there has been any engagement between staff and the Business Funding Committee (BFC) on the Shared Island Fund. The BFC Chair advised not as yet, but that there would be moving forward. The Chair asked that the relevant INI senior management engage fully with the BFC in respect of all aspects of the Shared Island Fund.

The Chair asked for an update on Peace Plus funding. Mel advised that he has had some outline discussions and believes that there may be opportunities to bid for funding. The Chair asked that the relevant INI senior management engage fully with the BFC in respect of all aspects of the Peace Plus bid.

A discussion then followed on how to make better use of our Comms to promote not just job announcements; but the non-financial assistance provided to business. The Chair reminded members that a paper on non-financial interventions is due at the August Board. Members also discussed how we could also provide analysis on how interest rate changes for example, impact on the Invest NI customers and the wider economy.

Action: Invest NI to consider how we get on the front foot of being the acknowledged leader on selling the NI economy globally, using our data and expert knowledge.

The Chair asked for an assessment of when the ESG Strategy would be brought to the Board for approval and suggested August. Mel confirmed that this would be brought to the Board in August for approval.

Action: The CEO is to bring the draft ESG Strategy to the August Board for approval.

Board members raised an e-mail received by them from a company seeking Invest NI support. Mel provided some background to the Board and confirmed he would respond to the e-mail from the company.

Action: The CEO is to respond to the email that Board members had received. No further action is required on behalf of the Board.

There was a brief discussion on the future location of the Invest NI office in Derry and what options were available.

Action: The CEO to update the August Board in respect of the future location of the Derry office.

2.3 FINANCE REPORT TO BOARD

Brian Dolaghan made a brief presentation to supplement the Finance Report to Board. Key headlines were: (i) significant focus in month on year end accounts and interaction with NIAO and good progress on Shared Prosperity Bid, with positive indications of potential funding. The Chair stated that we should seek to maximise collaboration where possible. Board members asked for a plan on how we will spend the money if Shared Prosperity funding was received.

Action: Board members asked for a paper for the August Board which sets out the background and analysis in respect of the Shared Prosperity Fund bids.

There was a brief discussion on land provision and Board members asked if we are buying or selling land at present. Brian Dolaghan advised that a Task & Finish group are currently looking at provision of land and Invest NI's role in this; but that substantial funding would be required to move forward.

The Chair asked if we are overly cautious in financial management, and should we be seeking to come to an arrangement with DfE where we can be more commercial. Brian advised this had been raised with DfE previously with regard to capital projects; but that DfE were not comfortable. The Chair stated that this may be worth another conversation. Mel cautioned against confusing risk attitude on projects compared to risk management of Budget.

3. UPDATE ON EMPLOYEE VOICE ACTIONS

Paddy Robb, Strategy Manager, joined for this agenda item. Carolyn McKenna introduced this item and Paddy then provided an update on the process followed when first engaging with staff and what was measured. Paddy stated that it is important to recommit to the actions agreed in October 2022 and reengage with staff. He also flagged the need to link actions to the work being done by Task & Finish Groups. The Chair thanked Paddy for his update and stated that a number of commitments had been made last October, and lack of progress should have been communicated to staff. The Chair highlighted the duty of care to staff and stated that we had not completed on the actions committed to. One Board member suggested offering staff the opportunity to observe an upcoming Board meeting. The Chair asked that ELT take time to go back and read what was previously committed to, by them, and articulate to staff where items have been picked up by T&F groups and where work still needs to be done to get this moving. The Chair concluded by stating that we need to keep staff informed and "join the dots" for them.

Action: At the August Board meeting, the CEO is to provide verbal assurance to the Board that the outstanding actions from the October process will be owned, managed and delivered by ELT. This to include how he will articulate to staff what has been actioned, what is to be addressed by the T&F Groups and how the remaining outstanding actions will be implemented.

Action: The Chair and Board Secretariat to consider inviting staff to attend Board meetings, as observers.

Paddy Robb left the meeting.

4. ACCESS TO FINANCE UPDATE

William McCulla, Director, Corporate Finance and Patrick Dewar, Corporate Finance Executive joined the meeting for this item. Brian Dolaghan introduced the item, Patrick then

provided an update on the current five funds and progress on Invest NI's Next Generation Funds and Invest NI's budget requirements moving forward.

William also touched on recycling of returns from funds, advising that the team has DoF approval to recycle both ERDF and baseline capital returns from our funds. William highlighted that it is not possible to recycle FTC, as any returns had to go back to HMT. The Chair stated that we should be seeking to refresh any agreements with DfE on recycling and discuss a self-sustaining funding environment. The meeting also discussed the potential of leveraging in investment from pension funds.

Brian Dolaghan passed on his thanks and credited William for the massive effort, time and dedication given in developing the market, before he retires from Invest NI. The Chair also added his thanks to William, on behalf of the Board, and wished him well for the future.

Action: The Business Funding Committee (BFC) to investigate the impact & outcomes on the NI economy of the investment decisions being made by the various Fund Managers who manage INI's debt & equity programmes.

William McCulla and Patrick Dewar left the meeting. Marie-Therese McGivern re-joined the Board meeting.

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

5.1 CHAIR'S BUSINESS

The Chair advised that the DfE Board is considering holding their December Board meeting in Invest NI and asked members to try and keep dates free. Melanie Dawson re-joined the meeting.

5.2 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Invest NI Dubai Office

Board approval was given to remove two Directors who have retired and the appointment of two new Directors in accordance with the Dubai Creative Clusters Private Companies Regulations 2016, and its amendments and subject to the provisions of the Company's Articles of Association.

City & Growth Deals

Julie-Ann O'Hare and Donal Durkan provided an update on City & Growth Deals for members.

Action: Board members asked for further detail on the regional location of each project, a brief description of each project's objectives and who the respective INI Investment Decision Makers (IDM) were for each project.

Action: Board members asked for a schedule showing how each C&GD project aligned with the 10X policy objectives of being more innovative, sustainable and inclusive.

6. INVEST NI OFFERS OVER LAST 10 YEARS

Gerard McNally joined the meeting for this item. Having provided background material to Board members prior to the meeting, Donal focussed on data showing Invest NI assistance by Council area split by company size, percentage offers and also highlighted areas of deprivation within NI and how we could begin to enhance our sub-regional approach. The Chair stated that it would be good to know where Invest NI assistance was going in the less supported areas to start to understand how support could be flexed depending on need.

Action: The Regional and Partnerships Committee (RPC) to explore what investment profiles look like in different parts of NI, to enable support to be flexed to need.

Board members stated that the areas of deprivation identified have been unchanged since 1979 and that Invest NI is only one part of a very complex issue. Board members also stated that we should be tracking every pound being invested and be able to vocalise our impacts.

Dominic Darby re-joined the meeting.

Kieran Kennedy then provided an update following a meeting of the Regional and Partnerships Committee and his ask of the Board and ELT, which is summarised as: People, Presence, Promotion, Partnerships, Proportionality, Performance Targets and Projectors. A Board member suggested that Passion should also be added. Kieran advised that more work is needed and at a faster pace.

The Chair stated that the Board is committed to focussing on sub-regionality and was ready to put their shoulder behind sub-regional development. An ELT member stated that they are already working on this, and a paper is already being worked up which will be shared with the

Board. The Chief Executive also stated that he was happy to lead on this on behalf of ELT. The Chair stated that as a starting point, presence and visibility would be easily organised.

Action: The Board asked for a paper for the September Board, setting out how ELT propose to substantively transform INI's delivery on a Sub Regional basis, having taken into account the issues highlighted by both the Board and the Lyons Review.

Gerard McNally left the meeting. The Chair left the meeting temporarily at this point and Michael McQuillan stepped in, to chair in his absence. Due to time constraints, the Chair (MMcQ) suggested that the discussion on large company assistance be included in the agenda for the upcoming Board Strategy Day in September. This was agreed.

7. KPI UPDATE

Jeremy Fitch presented the KPI Results for 2022. Mel stated that the results are a useful measure of what is happening in the marketplace and reflect available wider economic data. However, the question now is where we want to be in the next 5/10 years? Moving forward decision making needs to focus on where we want to put our assistance based on inputs, outputs and outcomes.

Action: The Board asked ELT for benchmarking data to compare the 4 reported INI KPIs against the comparative regions highlighted in the Lyons Review.

A Board member stated that we now need to be talking about how we improve and is there a single index measure we can use to analyse where best to put assistance. ELT members suggested that GVA would be the single measurement, the Board members also suggested that financial and social metrics need to be considered.

Action: The Board asked ELT to consider the development of a single GVA based measurement tool.

8. UPDATE ON ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY (EAM) & PRODUCTIVITY MEASURE

Keith Forster, DfE, Will Dickson, DfE and Clare Mullan, joined the meeting for this item. Donal Durkan introduced this item. Will and Keith then provided background to the two-stage review of the intervention principles, EAM and Economic Efficiency Toolkits to ensure they are fit for

purpose and 10X compliant. Will also provided context on the work to review existing expenditure controls and to develop a new productivity measure. A brief update was given on cost per job delegation and the proposed productivity assessment tool. The presentation concluded with proposed timelines for the operational phase, productivity tool road testing and 10X assessment tool implementation. Mel stated that it was good to see things moving but he would like progress to be faster and to keep the output in mind, which should be simple to apply in practice. Clare Mullan advised that they hoped to have interim guidance in place by September. Keith Forster agreed that the output needed to be simple to aid implementation.

Board members asked if the assessment tool would have weightings that could be flexed for different sectors. Clare confirmed this would be the case; but reminded everyone that this needs to be evidence based. Board members also asked if there would be a definition of productivity that everyone understands and is in line with other regions for comparative purposes. Keith confirmed that this would be clear in the guidance when issued. Clare also added that this would be a step change for everyone and that it needs to be right. Mel echoed this and also remarked that communication would be a key challenge – to staff, customers and stakeholders. A Board member stated that if this is the case then surely, we should be building a comms plan in parallel.

Action: The Board asked that a Communications Plan be developed in tandem with the development work being undertaken.

Keith Forster, Will Dickson, and Clare Mullan left the meeting. The Chair re-joined the meeting and thanked Michael McQuillan for covering in his absence.

9. MONTHLY REPORTING / PAPERS TO NOTE / BY EXCEPTION

9.1 MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

Paper was noted. There was a brief discussion about the upcoming Investment Summit and Board members were advised that invites were in the process of being issued.

9.2 PRIORITISATION UPDATE

Paper was noted.

9.3 RISK MANAGEMENT REPORT

Paper was noted, with the following comments – ARAC look after Risk; but ultimately Risk belongs to the Board. Risk Management and Risk Appetite will be discussed further at the Strategy workshop in September.

9.4 NI-CO UPDATE

Paper noted and covered earlier in the meeting.

9.5 UPDATED CASEWORK PROCESS PAPER

Board members stated their concerns as to this potentially being a large amount of work. The Chair of the BFC is to meet with the Chair on 11 July to discuss further. An ELT member asked if approval by correspondence might be an option for urgent cases. The Chair reiterated the Board's commitment to help in any way to deal with urgent cases. The Board was content to approve the casework process as detailed in the paper.

10. BOARD COMMITTEE CHAIR UPDATES

Business Funding Committee (BFC)

- ToR is finalised (with casework process to be updated). Would like to look at possibility of Access to Finance independent advisors sitting on BFC. Conscious there may be duplication with other Committees but will deal with this at monthly Committee Chair meetings

Audit Risk & Assurance Committee (ARAC)

- Update provided earlier in the meeting.

Strategic Resources Committee (SRC)

- Committee meeting organised for 4th July. ToR should be complete by end of August.

Regional and Partnerships Committee (RPC)

- Committee has held first meeting and ToR finalised. Thanks to Board Secretary for ensuring consistency across all Committee ToR's. Ambition to Grow – has brought 100 new businesses to Invest NI. RPC is gaining an understanding of different needs of Councils. Praised regional teams for their hard work in dealing with many different types of businesses.

Action: Board Secretary to forward finalised ToR's to Board members and ELT.

11. EXCEPTIONAL AOB

Invest NI Vision statement

To help the T&F groups it was suggested that an INI Vision statement should be agreed by Board and ELT - draft statement circulated to Board and ELT for feedback. The Chair asked that any final comments are sent to Dominic Darby by return with a view to finalising statement of purpose by lunchtime on Friday 30th June.

The meeting ended at 4.40pm.

12. DATE OF THE NEXT BOARD MEETING

The next Board meeting will be on Thursday 24th August 2023 and held at Invest NI HQ, Belfast.

Wendy Savage, July 2023

Chair

**TWO HUNDRED AND SEVENTH MEETING OF THE
INVEST NORTHERN IRELAND BOARD, 24 AUGUST 2023**

MEETING HELD AT INVEST NI HQ

Present:

Invest NI Board

Colm McKenna (Interim Chair)	Patrick O’Gorman
Colin Coffey	Julie-Ann O’Hare
Dominic Darby	Ciaran Mulgrew
Marie-Therese McGivern (virtual)	Melanie Dawson
Kieran Kennedy	Scott Ritchie

Board Secretary: Trevor Connolly

In Attendance: Mel Chittock, Alan McKeown (virtual), Brian Dolaghan, Carolyn McKenna, Donal Durkan, Jeremy Fitch, Steve Harper.

Minute Taker: Wendy Savage

The meeting commenced at 10.15am.

BOARD STANDING ITEMS

APOLOGIES

Apologies received from Dawn McLaughlin, Michael McQuillan and Peter Harbinson.

(i) DECLARATION OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Both Scott Ritchie and Ciaran Mulgrew asked for new interests to be added to their registers of interest. It was confirmed that there were no conflicts with any items under discussion today.

(ii) RAISING CONCERNS

Board members were reminded of their obligations under the raising concerns policy and procedures.

1. MINUTES

The minutes of the June Board meeting were agreed and will be published online.

2. MATTERS ARISING

The Chair advised that he had been considering the balance between the operational and strategic emphasis of the Board meetings. Having discussed the matter with the Board and following their endorsement, he confirmed that in future, only 1 in 3 Board meetings would be operationally based, with the other meetings being more strategically focussed. The Actions list was reviewed. The following was noted:

Action 13 – The Chief Executive raised some concerns on an update paper presented by DfE regarding the raising concerns issues previously referenced in the Lyons report. The Chair and other Board members felt a fuller explanation is required to close out this issue, given it was described in the Lyons report as a serious allegation.

Action: Board Secretary to write to DfE to ask for a fuller explanation on a raising concerns issue.

Actions 24, 61 and 62 to be covered as part of the Chief Executive's report to the Board.

Action 69 - The Chair asked that the Regional & Partnerships Committee (RPC) review the paper due in September, before it is presented to the Board, to ensure they are content.

3. CASEWORKS FOR APPROVAL

Colin Coffey provided an update on the new process and explained to Board members that the aim of the process is to have as little impact as possible on Board members' time and is underpinned by the principles of good governance, a clear recommendation by the Business Funding Committee (BFC) and Board approval.

There was a discussion in respect of the physical location as to where the jobs being created were reported on the system. The CEO stated that the system currently records all jobs

against the location of the company's headquarters but confirmed that he had asked for this to be changed, so that the investment location took priority.

Colin stated that the casework process is now supported by a dedicated ICT platform and packs will be no more than 30 pages long. Colin reminded Board members that the new process is timebound and is critically dependent on them being fully engaged and responding promptly. Colin advised that to date, the papers presented have been clear and concise and applauded the presenting teams. Colin advised that training in respect of the casework process would be considered by the BFC.

The CEO asked that BFC continue to provide feedback to Client Executives on the quality of the papers. He also suggested that as the Casework Forward Plan further develops, it would be helpful if ELT flagged up early, to the BFC, any contentious or challenging projects. Brian Dolaghan queried whether any conditions added by BFC would be visible to SECC. Colin Coffey confirmed that any new conditions would be requested by BFC, before making any recommendation to the Board.

4. INVEST NI REVIEW DELIVERY STEERING GROUP UPDATE

Dominic Darby provided an update on discussion at the last two Steering Group meetings which is summarised below:

- INI purpose / strategic intent was strongly welcomed by the Steering Group and they were happy with the speed to turnaround and importance in which the Board placed on giving the T&F groups clarity. There were some feedback which was agreed would be captured for the future iterations, INI business plan and 10X delivery plans.
- Problem and Solution Statements for all T&F groups endorsed, and the Group were comfortable they were helping the development of Strategic Actions.
- The 8th August meeting focussed on reviewing all the Strategic Actions. The Board and Leadership approach detail were deemed best in class and all groups benchmarked on this. Additional support and resource offered to Internationalisation, Green Economy, Skills and Place T&F groups.
- It was agreed to split the Operation Delivery group given the size and complexity and for Dominic to continue to work closely with them on the development of their Strategic Actions to avoid delaying the publication of the Action Plan.
- It was agreed that, prior to publication, there would be engagement on the Action Plan with Invest NI staff. The CEO confirmed that dates were being held for staff briefings.

OPERATIONAL ITEMS

5. ACCOUNTS 2022/23

Brian Dolaghan advised that the issue in respect of NI-CO remains outstanding and this item will be deferred until the September Board meeting at the earliest, when the ARAC Chair hopes to be able to recommend approval of the Accounts.

6. FINANCE REPORT TO BOARD

Brian Dolaghan made a brief presentation to supplement the Finance Report to Board. Key headlines were: (i) Indications of a softening of work in progress due to general uncertainty in the economy; (ii) surrender of funds to DfE and (iii) good progress on the bid for Shared Prosperity Funding, with positive indications of potential funding.

There was a lengthy discussion regarding the surrender of funds, with Board members asking whether monies could be using in an agile way to fund other things and whether our risk appetite is strong enough. Brian advised that currently, the market is not generating demand and that as an ALB, we can neither underspend nor overspend and that the decision to surrender funds is never the preferred option. There was dialogue in respect of developing a contingency plan to utilise extra / surplus funds which may arise in-year. Colin Coffey also raised whether Invest NI internally was as efficient as possible, in order to minimise overhead costs. The Chair confirmed that these decisions are always difficult; but that there are strict Budget management rules in place, which must be adhered to.

7. CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT TO BOARD

The Chief Executive provided a brief update to supplement the CEO Report to Board. Key headlines were: (i) With high rates of inflation and uncertainty on the global outlook it is difficult to forecast the direction of travel for the economy, (ii) The latest NI seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for the period April - June 2023 was estimated from the Labour Force Survey at 2.7%. This was an increase of 0.2 percentage points over the quarter and was unchanged from the same period last year, (iii) If we see an economic downturn next year it is likely that unemployment will rise and the number of companies at risk will increase. There may be a greater focus on Invest NI to step in to help maintain or create employment. Jobs

may come back on to the radar and we may be required to do more in respect of skills and job creation.

There was short discussion on the work being done by Invest NI to promote the Windsor Framework (WF) to a global audience and how visible that was to local stakeholders. Steve Harper confirmed that it was, and further work was required to identify specific sectors and international markets where the WF would have most impact.

The CEO then provided updates on NI-CO, Employee Voice actions and ongoing action in respect of the location for the Invest NI North West regional office and also updated the Board on a meeting with the Derry Chamber of Commerce. There was a brief discussion on possible sites for the Derry office including the Catalyst site and the Magee Campus; and full utilization of the Invest NI headquarters building, with the potential for subletting of space.

The Chair stated that we needed to be on the same page as DfE when it came to understanding and defining value for money and the CEO agreed.

The CEO confirmed that, when responding to FOI requests, Invest NI would ensure that spreadsheets were checked for any hidden data before they were released.

The CEO stated that the leases for both the Derry and Omagh offices had expired, which had led to an irregularity issue, which was being addressed.

The CEO confirmed that Invest NI had advised DfE on the conditionality that we will use to deliver 10X and we were awaiting Tier 3 specific metrics from DfE. He also advised that technical training for Client Executives would be taking place in September and October.

The CEO concluded by referencing the upcoming Investment Summit and the Chair encouraged Board members to attend as much of the event as possible and thanked the team (particularly Anne Beggs and Peter Harbinson) for their work in helping shape the event.

Due to time constraints, the CEO was unable to update the Board on performance to date. Board members asked that this be covered regularly, and explanation provided for any targets in the red category.

Action: CEO to ensure that, when updating the Board on Corporate Target Performance Reporting, there is sufficient explanation to explain why the performance is as reported and what actions he is taking to address any shortfalls. This will enable the Board to exercise its challenge function.

SPECIFIC PAPERS

8. ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL AND GOVERNANCE STRATEGY (ESG)

Paddy Robb, Strategy Manager, joined for this agenda item.

Alan McKeown introduced this item, and Paddy then provided a presentation to supplement the paper in the Board pack, with the ask that the Board approve the ESG strategy for implementation. Board members commented on the excellent paper and work to date and stated that this strategy is fundamental to the needs of the organisation and was an opportunity for Invest NI to be seen as a leader in this field. They stated that work should be accelerated where possible. One Board member asked to what extent the ESG team had engaged with DfE on their Circular Economy consultation paper and the Overview Committee mentioned therein. The Board unanimously approved the ESG strategy.

Action: The Board asked that ELT ensure that Invest NI engage fully with the DfE Circular Economy Consultation exercise.

Paddy Robb left the meeting. Kieran Kennedy left the meeting.

9. NON-FINANCIAL INTERVENTIONS

The Chair noted his disappointment that the paper did not refer to what the non-financial interventions are. The Chair stated that he feels Invest NI is underselling itself in this area, and that the non-financial interventions are potentially the most transformative for the organisation. Steve Harper accepted these comments and agreed that a new paper would go to the Board in November, once the work of the relevant Task & Finish Group is completed.

There was a brief discussion on how the performance of Fund Managers (debt & equity) is currently measured and the lack of detail as to the outcomes being achieved. The CEO agreed, stating that Invest NI needed to be clear, as part of the front end design of funds, as to what outcomes the Fund Managers would be held to account on.

Action: The Board asked that a Paper be prepared which clearly details the non-financial interventions that Invest NI deliver and also addresses - (i) are we making the best use of them? (ii) are we effectively communicating their value added to both

internal and external stakeholders and (ii) how will they be robustly captured and measured going forward.

Patrick O’Gorman left the meeting.

10. PAPERS TO NOTE

10.1 MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

Paper was noted.

10.2 CLOSURE OF BOARD WORKING GROUPS

Paper was noted. Colin Coffey noted that responsibility for oversight of Competence Centres needed a home and volunteered to look after this within BFC.

Action: Colin Coffey to amend ToR of the BFC to include responsibility for Competence Centres.

10.3 BUDGET IMPACT OF MAJOR PROJECTS

Paper was noted. The Chair asked that this paper be provided as a quarterly update to the Board.

Action: Paper be provided as a quarterly update to the Board.

10.4 SHARED PROSPERITY FUND UPDATE

Paper noted.

10.5 CITY & GROWTH DEALS

Papers noted. Board members complimented the team on the transparency and quality of the papers presented. When queried, the CEO confirmed that work was ongoing to allocate the Investment Decision Maker role out to senior managers but that this would be finalised soon.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Dominic Darby raised the issue of training for Board members and whether this should be tailored specifically for Board members.

Action: Board Secretary to consider an appropriate training programme which is bespoke for Board members.

There was brief discussion on the use of loans and equity funding as recommended under the Lyons Report: 3b. It was agreed this would be considered by the BFC, as well as seeking more baseline, rather than FTC, funding from DfE going forward.

The meeting ended at 1.00pm.

12. DATE OF THE NEXT BOARD MEETING

The next Board meeting will be at 09.00 on Thursday 21st September 2023 and held at the Canal Court Hotel, Newry.

Wendy Savage, August 2023

Chair

**TWO HUNDRED AND EIGHTH MEETING OF THE
INVEST NORTHERN IRELAND BOARD, 21 SEPTEMBER 2023
MEETING HELD AT CANAL COURT HOTEL, NEWRY**

Present:

Invest NI Board

Colm McKenna (Interim Chair)	Patrick O’Gorman
Colin Coffey	Julie-Ann O’Hare
Dominic Darby	Ciaran Mulgrew
Marie-Therese McGivern	Melanie Dawson
Kieran Kennedy	Scott Ritchie
Michael McQuillan	Dawn McLaughlin

Board Secretary: Trevor Connolly

In Attendance: Mel Chittock, Alan McKeown, Brian Dolaghan, Donal Durkan, Jeremy Fitch, Paula Logue, Peter Harbinson, Steve Harper.

Minute Taker: Wendy Savage

The meeting commenced at 09:00.

The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming Paula Logue, Executive Director, People & Culture, to her first Board meeting.

The Chair also put on record a debt of gratitude from the Board to Anne Beggs, Peter Harbinson and their respective teams for making the NI Investment Summit a tremendous success.

BOARD STANDING ITEMS

APOLOGIES

None Received.

(i) DECLARATION OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Dawn McLaughlin stated that for transparency, a client of her company (but that Dawn does not deal with directly) have made an application under the Ambition to Grow programme. It was confirmed that there were no other conflicts with any items under discussion today.

(ii) RAISING CONCERNS

Board members were reminded of their obligations under the raising concerns policy and procedures.

1. MINUTES

The minutes of the August Board meeting were agreed and will be published online.

2. ACTIONS & UPDATES

The Actions list was reviewed. The following was noted:

Action 13 – The Chair updated the Board that he had met with DfE. He is completely content with the process undertaken by DfE, who have fully investigated the issue and there is no substance to the allegations made. The Chair considers the matter to now be closed and will speak to the CEO separately.

Action 76 – Alan McKeown confirmed that Invest NI is fully engaged with DfE on the draft Circular Economy strategy.

Action 79 – Brian Dolaghan stated the next update would be in a slightly different, improved format.

3. ACCOUNTS 2022/23

The ARAC Chair advised that work is still progressing on the Audit and this item will be deferred until the October Board meeting, when ARAC hopes to be able to recommend

approval of the Accounts. The ARAC Chair confirmed she would be arranging an extraordinary ARAC meeting before the October Board. Following a query from the Chair, she confirmed that DfE were fully aware of the position. Colin Coffey highlighted the need to facilitate early closing of the year end accounts and take any lessons learnt from this year.

SPECIFIC PAPERS

4. BENCHMARKING DATA – KPI's

Jeremy Fitch presented further data as a follow up to his KPI presentation at the June Board meeting.

Dominic Darby joined the meeting and confirmed no conflicts with any items under discussion at today's meeting.

Board members asked for trend analysis on important KPIs to be prepared, going back over a number of years and which uses best in class as a comparator rather than just linking to UK regional trends, also showing data for the NI economy as a whole, as well as the Invest NI cohort of supported companies.

There was also a discussion on using GVA analysis, and also providing a trend analysis against the small economy comparator countries listed in the Lyons Report. Board members were advised that DfE is currently developing a standard set of data metrics for 10X. The Chair stated that these could be used if they yield the data we require for measurement. The Board was reminded that the use of a single GVA measurement is to be discussed at the October Board meeting.

The CEO highlighted that exports was only one dimension and that employment and levels of economic activity were also important. He highlighted exports per head of population and per individual employee as being potential measures.

Action: The Board asked for a further paper to be provided which includes trend analysis (2016 to date) of important KPIs and which also clearly identifies both Brexit and Windsor Framework. Other points to consider - employment; exports per head of population / exports per individual employed; best in class rather than just compare against UK regions; small economy comparators and GVA analysis.

5. CASEWORKS FOR APPROVAL

Colin Coffey, Chair of the Business Funding Committee (BFC), brought forward a recommendation to the Board for approval of new pilot skills related programme. The Board unanimously approved the programme.

There was a discussion as to whether these types of programmes should sit with SRC, rather than BFC. The Chair confirmed that all casework goes through BFC, but the BFC Chair can invite other Board members to casework, as required.

There was a discussion about issues for members in accessing documents as part of the casework process. It was agreed that all Board members should be issued with Invest NI secure ICT devices.

Action: Each Board member who does not already have an Invest NI Surface Pro to be supplied with one asap; and induction and familiarisation sessions to be delivered by ICT to them.

Colin Coffey also reiterated the need for training for Board members in light of the new 5 case Economic Appraisal model which had recently been introduced by DfE, as the default model.

Action: All Board members to be trained on new 5 case Economic appraisal model.

The Chair reminded Board members of the need to respond immediately to requests from staff so as to confirm any conflicts of interest on specific caseworks. This would, in turn, enable the casework papers to be circulated quickly.

Dominic Darby put on record that Teams is working well as a way of progressing casework approval.

6. INVEST NI REVIEW DELIVERY STEERING GROUP UPDATE

Dominic Darby provided an update on discussions at the last Steering Group meeting which are summarised below:

- External calibration meetings conducted over last two weeks with Sir Michael Lyons and his review team, the Business Alliance, SOLACE and Francis Ruane.
- Mixed feedback but recognition that significant work has been completed.
- Next meeting of Steering group is on 25th September. The need for a clear communications plan, reviewed by the SRC, has been escalated to the Comms team.
- General feeling that Solution statements need to provide a balance between making them user friendly and using design thinking terminology.
- The first draft of the Action Plan, from the designers, was received on 19th September and had been circulated to Board members.

Action: Final version of Invest NI Review Action Plan to be shared with Board members for information, prior to official launch.

7. INVEST NI PURPOSE STATEMENT

The Chair advised that all Invest NI staff had been given the opportunity to provide feedback to the draft Invest NI purpose statement. All feedback provided was considered by the Board and ELT and the draft statement was improved and amended accordingly. This was then circulated to DfE. The CEO advised that staff are now keen to see change in action. The reimagined Vision 26 graphic was also fully endorsed by the Board.

8. TRANSFORMING INVEST NI SUB REGIONAL SUPPORT

Alan McKeown provided an update to supplement the paper provided in the Board pack.

Following a wide ranging discussion from Board members on where our focus should be, and how we ‘do business’ moving forward, the Chair stated that further dialogue would take place during the closed NED Session. The Chair advised that the recently announced EY project was a good example of how Invest NI is doing things differently and that ownership, by the Board, of the additional conditionality (e.g. the North West hub) was not being communicated to key external stakeholders. The Chair stated that this Paper was an opportunity to make profound change, to think outside of the box and to collaborate / partner effectively with other key organisations/stakeholders across NI.

Action (following discussion at NED closed session): The Chair asked for a revised Paper to be presented to the Board, which has been reviewed and approved by RPC (and SRC as required), which addresses the following issues: founded on the principles of collaboration and partnership working, using the Newry ecosystem as an exemplar, involving key external stakeholders such as Chamber of Commerce, Local Councils,

universities, FE Colleges and other departments, to clearly demonstrate how our new approach will make a fundamental difference to (i) how Invest NI delivers Sub-Regional support and (ii) how we are perceived as doing so, by key local stakeholders / businesses.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Nothing was raised under this item.

The Board meeting ended at 11:00am.

10. ACTIONS ARISING FROM STRATEGY WORKSHOP HELD ON WEDNESDAY 20TH SEPTEMBER

Action: Paper to come to Board, which has first been reviewed by the SRC, setting out proposals re Entrepreneurship following completion of the work undertaken with the MIT Regional Entrepreneurship Accelerator Programme (REAP).

Action: ARAC to monitor quarterly reporting of Post Project Evaluations and then update the Board on a regular basis.

Action: The updated Risk Appetite to be circulated to the Board and agreed at the next Board meeting.

Action: ARAC Chair, supported by Colin Morelli, to ensure there is an annual Risk Management workshop for the Board, which includes reviewing the Risk Appetite and also horizon scanning.

11. ACTIONS ARISING FROM NED CLOSED SESSION HELD ON THURSDAY 21ST SEPTEMBER

Action: The Chair has asked for a paper from the CEO which sets out options to utilise the existing spare office capacity within Invest NI's headquarters and which addresses the following issues: (i) providing access to external stakeholders (e.g. Catalyst's hub

in Danske bank; Makers Alliance; Agri-food; IoD etc) and (ii) invite a social enterprise to run a cafe from the ground floor in HQ.

Action: The Chair has asked for a paper from the CEO which sets out options and supporting rationale for the location of the new Invest NI office in the North West.

12. DATE OF THE NEXT BOARD MEETING

The next Board meeting will be Operational in nature, will commence at 10:15 on Thursday 26th October 2023 and will be held at Invest NI HQ, Belfast.

Wendy Savage, September 2023

Chair

**TWO HUNDRED AND NINTH MEETING OF THE
INVEST NORTHERN IRELAND BOARD, 26 OCTOBER 2023
MEETING HELD AT INVEST NI HEADQUARTERS, BELFAST**

Present:

Invest NI Board

Colm McKenna (Interim Chair)	Patrick O’Gorman
Colin Coffey	Julie-Ann O’Hare
Dominic Darby (virtual)	Ciaran Mulgrew
Marie-Therese McGivern (virtual)	Melanie Dawson
Kieran Kennedy	Scott Ritchie
Michael McQuillan	Dawn McLaughlin (virtual)

Board Secretary: Trevor Connolly

In Attendance: Mel Chittock, Alan McKeown, Donal Durkan, Jeremy Fitch, Paula Logue, Peter Harbinson, Steve Harper.

Minute Taker: Wendy Savage

The meeting commenced at 09:00. The Chair opened the meeting and flagged that Mel and Steve would be late arriving, as they were attending a breakfast event in respect of the Joe Kennedy III Investment Delegation visit.

BOARD STANDING ITEMS

APOLOGIES

Apologies received from Brian Dolaghan.

(i) DECLARATION OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Colin Coffey stated that he had been appointed as Chair of the Public Health Agency from 1 November 2023. It was confirmed that there were no other conflicts with any items under discussion today.

(ii) RAISING CONCERNS

Board members were reminded of their obligations under the raising concerns policy and procedures.

1. MINUTES

The minutes of the September Board meeting were agreed and will be published online.

The Chair highlighted that the next Board meeting would be a Strategic one, to be held on Thursday 30 November in Enniskillen, and would include an external stakeholder event in the afternoon.

2. ACTIONS & UPDATES

The Actions list was reviewed. The following was noted:

Action 59 – the Chair stated that that this was being taken forward through SRC, as part of wider communications actions identified in the Invest NI Review Action Plan. He also noted that an update had been included in the CEO report.

Action 64 – the Chair noted that an article, from him, had been published in that week’s Newsweekly inviting staff to attend Board meetings as observers.

Action 65 – the Business Funding Committee (BFC) Chair confirmed that BFC was addressing this issue and would come back to the Board promptly.

Action 72 – the Chair noted that he had agreed that this action will be taken forward by SRC and will come back to the Board promptly.

Action 73 –the Strategic Resources Committee (SRC) Chair confirmed that SRC was addressing this issue and will come back to the Board promptly.

Action 75 – the Chair noted that this was an Annex to the CEO’s Report.

Action 77 - the Chair noted this was on the Agenda at point 10.

Action 79 – the Chair noted that he had agreed that this would come as a Paper to note for the November Board.

Action 80 – the Chair noted that this had been deferred to the November Board.

Action 81 – the Chair noted this was on the Agenda at point 9.

Action 82 - the Chair noted that, following the Board meeting, all Board members would have their own Invest NI Surface Pros.

Action 83 – the Chair noted that this action was due for November Board.

Action 84 – the Chair noted that he met with the Regional Partnerships Committee (RPC) Chair on Tuesday 10 October and had had a very constructive discussion about the Paper, which is due for the November Board.

Action 85 – the Chair stated that he had agreed with the CEO that this will be dealt with via correspondence, prior to the November Board meeting.

Action 86 - the Chair noted this was on the Agenda at point 11.

Action 87 – the Chair noted that this action was due for November Board.

Action 88 - the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) Chair confirmed that ARAC was addressing this issue and would come back to the Board promptly.

Action 89 – the Chair noted that this action was due for November Board.

Action 90 - the ARAC Chair confirmed that ARAC was addressing this issue and would come back to the Board promptly.

4. CASEWORKS FOR APPROVAL

Colin Coffey, BFC Chair, brought forward a recommendation to the Board for approval of two projects:

- Accelerator Programme.
- Growth Finance Fund (Non-Material Amendment).

Following a robust and wide-ranging discussion, the Board unanimously approved both projects.

Colin highlighted that there was still work to be done, by ELT, to ensure that business cases coming forward were not written in isolation, but instead were joined up i.e. listed out all other relevant Invest NI interventions and made very clear that the proposal was fully aligned to the

delivery of 10x, the Invest NI Review Action Plan and City & Growth Deals. Executive colleagues accepted this and highlighted that they were still awaiting detailed metrics on both 10x Inclusion and Sustainability from DfE.

The Chair then led an iterative conversation in respect of Agri-Food. This included the following:

- The economic value to the NI economy generated by the Agri-Food processing sector.
- The opportunity to support the transformation of this critical sector in order to deliver the 10x Economic Vision.
- The vital role that Invest NI can play in supporting the industry, as it changes to becoming more innovative, sustainable and inclusive.
- The two proposals which would be going to DfE Casework in the coming weeks, one a company specific project and the other a scheme to provide capital grant support to the agri-food processing industry, as a whole, to help it deliver 10x.
- By its intrinsically rural nature, this is an industry which is regionally located.
- Hence, supporting it provides Invest NI with the opportunity to directly address the perception that the organisation is only interested in a Belfast centric approach; and also help deliver inclusivity and the forthcoming DfE Place10x Strategy.

Following an intensive and far-reaching dialogue, it was agreed that the Chair, the BFC Chair and the CEO would meet in late October to discuss how the recently approved casework would be presented to DfE, and by whom.

Action: Agri-Food meeting to be arranged in late October between the Chair, BFC Chair and CEO to discuss how the recently approved casework will be presented to DfE, and by whom.

The Chair reminded Board members of the need to respond immediately to requests from staff so as to confirm any conflicts of interest on specific caseworks. This would, in turn, enable the casework papers to be circulated quickly.

5. INVEST NI REVIEW DELIVERY STEERING GROUP UPDATE

Dominic Darby provided an update on the meeting with the NI Chamber of Commerce on Thursday 19 October on the Invest NI Review Action Plan, which also included political parties. He highlighted that there was a focus on productivity, the need for the organisational structure to change and discussion about the lack of an Executive. He stated that the reception was

broadly positive with widespread recognition of the amount of work that had been undertaken to date.

The Board then discussed the next steps required internally to enable the Action Plan to be implemented through to 2025. Dominic highlighted that the Invest NI Review Steering Group was meeting on Thursday 16 November, and that this would be discussed.

The Chair highlighted the need for joint implementation of the Action Plan by DfE and Invest NI, in exactly the same way that the Action Plan had been developed.

A Board member asked for an update in respect of the draft DfE / Invest NI Partnership Agreement (PA). The Chair confirmed that, following some delay at his end, the draft PA was with the CEO. The Chair stated that, as far as he was concerned, it was finalised and needed to then go to DfE. He also highlighted that this was an opportunity to challenge DfE/DoF delegations, if the CEO felt that these were unduly constraining Invest NI in the market place.

An executive colleague questioned whether the level of detail provided in a recent communication on action plan implementation was necessary.

The Chair commented that he personally had approved the level of detail provided, which had been agreed with DfE following the launch of the action plan in early October. He added that he felt the level of detail provided was deemed necessary to deliver the actions in respect of Invest NI Board, Leadership and Partnership.

The executive colleague added that while it was accepted that the Actions were already in the public domain the level of detail behind each of the Actions, which may have an impact on certain members of staff, was not in the public domain.

The Chair reminded Board members and executive colleagues that the response contained nothing that anyone in the room would be surprised at.

Board members commented on the launch of the Action Plan, the media emphasis on productivity and the 'perceived' pivot away from job creation. The Chair stated that this was incorrect as, in the future, Invest NI would deliver job creation and appropriate Foreign Direct Investment, improved productivity, 10x and City and Growth Deals. Hence to describe it as a binary choice between productivity and job creation was incorrect. It was agreed that a key task going forward for ELT and Board, would be to brief key stakeholders / media on Invest NI's new purpose, to ensure a mutually agreed understanding. Dominic Darby flagged he had

done this at the NI Chamber of Commerce meeting he had attended with both DfE and INI colleagues on 19th October referenced earlier in the minutes.

6. COMMITTEE CHAIR REPORTING

The Chair invited the Chairs of BFC, RPC and SRC to provide a brief verbal update on their papers.

Colin Coffey confirmed that meetings dates for all three committees, as well as the ARAC had been agreed by the four Chairs up to the summer of 2024. He reiterated the need for all Board members to review the Casework papers thoroughly, whether in their role as a BFC member or as part of the wider Board.

Marie-Therese McGivern noted that SRC was looking at Finance, HR, Digital & Comms within Invest NI and the respective strategic plans and actions to be developed and delivered by ELT. Marie-Therese confirmed that all strategic plans would be fully aligned to the delivery of 10x, City and Growth Deals and the Invest NI Review Action Plan. She noted the need to urgently resource both the HR and Strategic Policy functions and to build on the good working relationships developed with DfE, as part of the Task & Finish Groups' work. She noted that, following discussions with the Chair, he had agreed that a Board Corporate Planning day would be held on Tuesday 12th December and would be led by the SRC.

Action: Board Corporate Planning Day to be held on Tuesday 12th December 2023 in Invest NI HQ and led by SRC.

Kieran Kennedy noted that RPC was continuing to engage with DfE and SOLACE to build effective working relationships. He highlighted that Ambition to Grow had had 3 calls to date and was a much more efficient process to attract new client companies to Invest NI. He had personally received very positive feedback from the companies involved. He noted that he had met with the Chair previously to discuss the revised Sub Regional Paper which he felt was now on track.

A Board member queried whether each of the 3 Committees: BFC, RPC and SRC were considering the potential opportunities to maximise the benefits from the City & Growth Deals. The Chair agreed that this was an essential ask of each of the Committee Chairs, and

highlighted that for Invest NI going forward, the three guiding lights were – the delivery of the Invest NI Review Action Plan, 10x and City and Growth Deals.

Katrina O'Dowd and Alan Harris joined the meeting for agenda items 6, 7 and 8.

7. CEO REPORT TO BOARD

The CEO provided an overview of his Paper. He highlighted the following issues:

- The NI economic landscape was unclear and uncertain. There was a potential downturn in the private sector with high interest rates starting to impact. Inflation was forecast to fall but oil prices were forecast to rise. The level of redundancies was thankfully still low as companies were holding on to skilled staff. There was a high degree of business caution, with companies scaling back on activity and slowing / deferring future projects.
- Invest NI was now a Corporate Member of Working With Pride (WWP).
- The level of business uncertainty was playing into the demand for Invest NI's programmes, with reduced spending being forecast across R&D, Skills and Employment. This was highlighted by the forecast Year End performance updated in the Annex to the CEO's Report. He noted that there had been a recent marked slowdown on claims drawdown by companies.
- Mel also stated that high rates of inflation, increasing interest rates and uncertainty on the global outlook make it difficult to forecast the direction of travel for the NI economy.
- Mel highlighted the tremendous success of the NI Investment Summit and the lunchtime thank you event for the staff involved in delivering it.

Melanie Dawson congratulated Invest NI on becoming a Corporate Member of WWP and noted it was a great example of putting Diversity and Inclusion into action and was fully supported by the Board.

Action: The Chair has requested that a regular monthly update to come to the Board, commencing in November, irrespective of the nature of the meeting, setting out the latest performance update with explanation as to why the performance is as reported and what actions the CEO is taking to address any shortfalls.

8. FINANCE REPORT

In Brian Dolaghan's absence, the CEO led on this item. Mel stated that:

- Invest NI would be surrendering both Resource and Capital funding in the October Monitoring round to DfE. As noted previously, there was a falloff in demand across Invest NI's 3 key programme areas –employment, skills and R&D.
- He emphasised that the organisation had gone through a very thorough and robust process to identify other potential uses of the funds, which must be spent fully by year end, before considering any surrender.
- On Capital he noted a high level of capital receipts, which had created additional headroom. He also noted that a small number of significant projects could impact spend to the year end.
- Mel highlighted that the Invest NI Finance team had been working very closely with their DfE counterparts throughout this process to ensure there were no surprises.

Board members expressed their severe disappointment at the need to surrender funding and robustly challenged why (i) new projects could not be developed, (ii) spend on existing programmes could not be increased or (iii) collaboration undertaken with other organisations. They also sought assurance from the CEO that he would do everything in his power to minimise surrenders of funding in the future. The Chair queried whether other regional economic development agencies were facing the same issue. The CEO confirmed that his informal feedback was that they were all facing the same degree of uncertainty.

There was a brief discussion about planning for the use of alternative funding sources (e.g. Shared Prosperity Fund, NIO, Shared Island funding) to ensure that these were complementary, rather than supplementary, to baseline allocations.

A Board member asked that purchasing new property holdings be factored into the future planning for the Capital budget.

The Chair highlighted that the fact that we do not have multi-year budgets does not impede Invest NI from having multi-year plans. He also noted that risk appetite was a factor here and this was an issue for Invest NI, DfE and DoF together. He noted the potential scenario that surrenders during 2023-24 could lead to Invest NI's opening budget allocation for 2024-25 being reduced. He stated that there was clearly a need for better forward budget planning and the ability to have new 'shovel ready' projects ready to go, with an increased work in progress pipeline.

Action: Budget Impact of major projects. The Chair agreed that this be deferred until November Board as a Paper to note.

Action: The Chair asked that the CEO prepare a Paper which sets out the compelling case, for DfE / DoF, as to why the in-year Budget surrenders should not impact on the opening budget position for Invest NI for 2024-25.

9. ACCOUNTS 2022/23 & ARAC UPDATE

The ARAC Chair confirmed that ARAC had undertaken a detailed review of the draft Accounts and provided an update to the Board highlighting the issues that arose through the audit and an outline of the C&AG report. She thanked the Invest NI Finance team for their tremendous effort and commended them on how well they had worked with both DfE and NIAO.

Katrina O'Dowd thanked the ARAC Chair and also provided some further detail on the key points included in the NIAO Report To those Charged With Governance. The ARAC Chair asked the Board to confirm that they were content for the Accounting Officer to sign-off the Accounts. The Board unanimously approved.

Katrina O'Dowd and Alan Harris left the meeting.

SPECIFIC PAPERS

10. KPI TREND ANALYSIS

Darrell McCullough, Corporate Information Team joined for this agenda item.

Jeremy Fitch presented further data as a follow up to his KPI presentation at the September Board meeting.

There was a wide-reaching discussion which included:

- The level of Invest NI support provided to businesses.
- The difference between exports (outside the UK) and external sales (outside NI).
- The benefit of the Windsor Framework was still to come.
- NI was not as badly hit as other UK regions during COVID due to cross border trade.

- How do we measure cause and effect i.e. identify which programmes had which impact on our KPIs? Need the data to bridge activity and effect in the economy. This would then demonstrate the additionality of Invest NI, as an organisation.

Action: The Board asked for a Paper, to be shared by correspondence before the November Board meeting, providing analysis which shows what proportion of Invest NI's support went to the top 10 companies during the period 2013-2022 (ref -slides 11 & 12 in the Board paper).

Action: The Board asked for a Paper, to be shared by correspondence before the January Board meeting, for analysis to be undertaken which demonstrates cause and effect, i.e. details the Invest NI intervention and the corresponding impact that it had on our KPIs, over the 2013-2022 period.

Action: The Board asked Jeremy Fitch to consider and report back on how slide 19 in the Board paper, which shows NI as the 5th best GB region for Productivity, compares to recent media articles, which demonstrate an opposing view. This will be taken as a Paper to note at the November Board meeting.

Dominic Darby, Marie-Therese McGivern, Dawn McLaughlin, Steve Harper, and Darrell McCullough left the meeting.

11. NON-FINANCIAL INTERVENTIONS

Alan McKeown highlighted that the paper demonstrated the breadth and depth of the non-financial interventions being delivered across Invest NI.

The Chair thanked Alan for the paper and noted that a key issue was the need for Invest NI to get better at storytelling and briefing key external stakeholders and media on this critical work. He also committed on the need for appropriate measures and targets for the non-financial interventions. The CEO agreed with this point and noted that Invest NI had lost its voice in the marketplace. Mel also highlighted the critical role of Board members as ambassadors for the organisation, which the Board fully endorsed. The Board discussed the need for a new strategic approach to Communications and Marketing, which SRC were leading on.

12. LOCATION OF NORTH WEST OFFICE

The CEO noted that, as per his paper, he was still looking at options. Work was ongoing to review the recent proposal from the Derry & Strabane Council. He confirmed that the new Invest NI office would not only be a location for our staff but also operate as a hub for local businesses.

Action: the CEO updated the Board on latest position and agreed to come back to the Board following analysis of the recent option proposed by Derry & Strabane Council. This will be taken as a Paper to note at the November Board meeting.

13. MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

The Chair congratulated Peter Harbinson as, at the recent NI Social Media Awards, Invest NI won the Digital In-House Team of the Year category, beating Power NI, South Eastern Health Trust and Purple Dot. Our Ambition to Grow and Go Further, Grow Stronger export campaigns were referenced as exemplars.

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Nothing was raised under AOB. The Board meeting ended at 12.30.

15. DATE OF THE NEXT BOARD MEETING

The next Board meeting will be Strategic in nature, will commence at 09.00 on Thursday 30 November 2023 and will be held in the Erne Campus, South West Regional College in Enniskillen and will include an external stakeholder event in the afternoon.

Wendy Savage, November 2023

Chair

**TWO HUNDRED AND TENTH MEETING OF THE
INVEST NORTHERN IRELAND BOARD, 30 NOVEMBER 2023
MEETING HELD AT ERNE CAMPUS, SOUTH WEST COLLEGE, ENNISKILLEN**

Present:

Invest NI Board

Colm McKenna (Interim Chair)	Patrick O’Gorman
Colin Coffey	Julie-Ann O’Hare
Dominic Darby	Ciaran Mulgrew
Marie-Therese McGivern	Melanie Dawson
Kieran Kennedy	Scott Ritchie
Michael McQuillan	Dawn McLaughlin

Board Secretary: Trevor Connolly

In Attendance: Mel Chittock, Alan McKeown, Brian Dolaghan, Dónal Durkan, Jeremy Fitch, Paula Logue, Peter Harbinson.

Minute Taker: Wendy Savage

The meeting commenced at 10:15.

The Chair congratulated Marie-Therese McGivern on her appointment as Chair of Visit Belfast.

BOARD STANDING ITEMS

APOLOGIES

Apologies received from Steve Harper.

(i) DECLARATION OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Michael McQuillan stated that he would leave the meeting temporarily during the discussion regarding one of the projects to be considered for approval later in the meeting. It was confirmed that there were no other conflicts with any items under discussion today.

Although previously reported, Kieran Kennedy confirmed that he was not conflicted with regard to another project to be considered.

It was confirmed that there were no other conflicts with any items under discussion today.

(ii) RAISING CONCERNS

Board members were reminded of their obligations under the raising concerns policy and procedures.

1. MINUTES

The minutes of the September Board meeting were discussed and agreed subject to two minor amendments - following a query raised around wording in respect of the Independent Review Delivery Steering Group Update, which will be taken offline for discussion and an agreed change to the wording within the Finance Report.

2. ACTIONS & UPDATES

The Board Secretary updated the meeting on the Actions list and the following was noted:

Action 75 – Corporate Target Performance Reporting – Paper included on the November Agenda and will be a regular monthly update commencing in January.

Action 79 – Budget Impact on Major Projects – Paper included on the November Agenda and will be added to Forward Planner for quarterly update

Action 80 – Board Training - Paper included on the November Agenda.

Action 83 – 5 Case Economic Appraisal training – closed via correspondence on 6th November.

Action 84 – Sub-Regional Support - Paper included on the November Agenda.

Action 85 – Spare Capacity within INI HQ – It was noted that a Paper had been circulated to the Board by the Interim CEO on Tuesday 28 November and would be discussed later in the meeting.

Action 86 – NW Office location - Paper included on the November Agenda.

Action 87 – Entrepreneurship - the Chair noted that this Paper had been withdrawn prior to the meeting and would be discussed at Agenda point 6.

Action 89 – Updated Risk Appetite - the Chair stated that he was very disappointed that, despite several requests, the Paper was not ready for the November Board. he commented that the draft paper received was a long way from where we need to be.

Action: The Chair asked the ARAC Chair and Board Secretary to consider the draft Risk Appetite statement which had been received by the Board secretariat shortly before the November Board meeting, with a view to having a fit for purpose Risk Appetite statement being tabled at the January 2024 Board meeting for approval.

Action 92 – Corporate Planning Day **Action: The Chair requested that the SRC Chair and SRC Secretariat come back to him, before Christmas, with a proposed agenda and a date in January for the half day workshop.**

Action 94 – KPI Trend Analysis – closed via correspondence on 23rd November.

Action 95 – KPI Trend Analysis – Cause and Effect Paper to be dealt with via correspondence prior to the January 2024 Board meeting.

Action 96 – KPI Trend Analysis (Productivity comparison) - Paper included on the November Agenda.

Action 97 – Budget position 2024/25 - Paper included on the November Agenda.

Action 98 – Implementation of Action Plan (action added as request from Chair, post October Board meeting) - Paper included on the November Agenda.

In respect of Action 85: Spare Capacity within INI HQ, the Chair noted that the Interim CEO had circulated a Paper to the Board, prior to the November meeting, and some Board members had already responded, via email. During the ensuing discussion, the following points were raised:

- Option to consider a service office manager to manage the office space?
- Options around the provision of the café under the existing contract?
- Detailed analysis required to address specific queries raised by email.

The CEO noted that ELT were discussing the Hybrid working policy in December and that he would like to consider this, as well as the detailed feedback provided by Board members, before reverting to Board on the points raised. He noted that Monday and Friday were quiet days in most public sector buildings. He also stated that, as the building was provided under a PFI contract by Serco, there were contract terms regarding what could and could not be done, and that funding for the building is ringfenced.

Action: CEO to consider the points made by Board members and come to the January 2024 Board meeting with a revised Paper for approval.

16. CASEWORKS FOR APPROVAL

The Chair reminded all Board members of the critical need to respond immediately to requests from staff, confirming any conflicts of interest on specific caseworks. This would, in turn, enable the casework papers to be circulated quickly.

Colin Coffey, BFC Chair, brought forward a recommendation to the Board for approval of three projects:

- Techstart Fund II (Non-Material Amendment)
- Mallaghan Engineering (Amendment)
- NI Small Business Loan Fund III

Michael McQuillan left the meeting temporarily due to a conflict with one of the items under discussion. Following a robust and wide-ranging discussion, the Board unanimously approved all projects. Michael McQuillan re-joined the meeting. The Board also approved an addendum to the casework process brought forward by Colin Coffey.

SPECIFIC PAPERS

17. TRANSFORMING SUB-REGIONAL SUPPORT

Ethna McNamee (Manager, Western Regional Office) and Susan O’Kane (Manager, Eastern Regional Office) joined the meeting for this item.

Alan McKeown introduced this item and handed over to Susan and Ethna who presented on the partnerships they work with within the Eastern Regional Office and Western Regional

Office and set out their own particular needs and wants. Both Susan and Ethna concluded by explaining what more could be done to strengthen and widen the partnerships in their own areas as part of the plan to transform regional support. Alan stated that we need to be better in promoting the good news stories emerging from the regions and that today's stakeholder event was seen as a commitment by the Board to engage with a range of stakeholder across all of the regions.

Kieran Kennedy passed on his thanks to all of the regional teams, stating they were embedded in local communities and had a true passion to engage. Kieran added that he was happy to see the commitment from ELT to support this transformation in regional support; but that this was just the start of their journey and that he and the Regional and Partnerships Committee would keep the Board fully informed on progress and would not do anything without Board approval.

There was a wide-ranging discussion, which included queries on the process required to develop and measure appropriate sub-regional economic targets in partnership with other stakeholders (to include input costs and target outputs / outcomes e.g., GVA and social value) and the asks of the regional team to be able to deliver. Both Susan and Ethna highlighted stretched resources, the need to develop targets through co-design and manage expectations from both clients and stakeholders.

Board members noted that that this Paper was much improved from that previously seen in September and suggested that we should not refer to 'sub-regional' moving forward, just 'regional'. One Board member also advised that we need to fully digitise our systems to help on the transformation journey.

The CEO stated that place-based strategies were important as there are pockets of deprivation across all regions in Northern Ireland and engagement with local Councils and Chambers of Commerce is critical to ensuring we are complementary to existing services being provided, rather than displacing / duplicating them. The CEO agreed that the regional strategy needed a digital overlay, and we should be critically reviewing our own digital solutions and services. Alan McKeown stated that a paper on digitisation come to the Board by the end of the financial year.

Action: Paper on Digitisation to be presented to the March 2024 Board meeting.

The Chair thanked both Susan and Ethna for their presentation, which had brought the Board Paper to life, stated that resourcing would need to be addressed as part of the work to develop the strategy and agreed that we should stop making reference to 'Sub-regional' and moving forward, use 'Regional'. The Chair highlighted the comments he had made publicly while engaging with external stakeholders and referenced his response to SOLACE, in which he had expressed his commitment to working in partnership with the Councils. The Board unanimously approved the Paper presented on Regional transformation. Ethna and Susan left the meeting.

18. IMPLEMENTATION OF INDEPENDENT REVIEW ACTION PLAN

The CEO referenced the Paper in the Board pack and stated that overall accountability for the implementation of the published Action Plan lay with him, as Accounting Officer, and his intention was that ELT would have their responsibility for actions embedded within their job plans, a Project Management Office (PMO) function would be put in place to manage day-to-day activity and a monthly Action Plan focussed ELT meeting was to be organised to track and report on progress.

The Chair advised that the paper had been discussed at the earlier closed NED session and made the following comments. The Board felt that the Implementation Oversight Group (IOG) now has too many Board members as we enter the operational delivery phase and the Board had agreed to reduce this from four to two Board members, with three Executives attending – the CEO and two others, with the two not necessarily being ELT members. The CEO stated he would like to have some internal discussions before bringing forward names. The Chair stated that he would expect an answer within a week, and that the CEO was already aware of his suggestions. The Chair made clear, following disappointment expressed by Board members in respect of time slippage in one area, that Invest NI cannot miss any more delivery targets. He was also concerned that there had been no early warning of this to the Board.

The Chair stated that Board members would like to see a detailed implementation plan with timelines to be able to hold the Executive to account and that he wanted this by mid-December. He was very clear that Invest NI now had a huge credibility issue with DfE and we needed to give confidence to DfE that we were serious about delivery. The Chair made clear that if there was any risk of potential slippage this had to come to the Board early, so that the Board could take corrective action. The Board discussed the need to understand the resource asks required to deliver the Action Plan, these should be addressed through reprioritisation of existing posts and that these had not been shared with SRC.

Action: The Chair asked for a Gantt chart, showing the enabling tasks, milestones, the ELT Lead member, and the specific individual who is responsible for delivery, for each of the 35 Strategic Actions in the published Action Plan. This is to be shared with the Board before Thursday 14 December 2023. A regular monthly update on progress is to come to the Board as a Standing Agenda Item, commencing with the January 2024 Board meeting.

19. ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROPOSALS

The Chair shared his disappointment that this Paper had had to be withdrawn before the Board meeting, given the amount of time the team had had to prepare the Paper. The Chair reminded Executive colleagues of the need to ensure timelines are met in clearing/issuing papers for the Board meetings (i.e., with the Board Secretariat one week in advance of the Board meeting, at the latest) and the need to factor in additional time if a Paper was to be endorsed by one of the Board Committees.

The Chair articulated that, in exceptional circumstances, an urgent Paper can be approved by the Board via correspondence, however it must be explicit from the outset that the Paper is for approval and the rationale must be clearly set out in the Paper. Otherwise, any paper circulated to the Board via correspondence must be for information only and agreed and issued by the Board Secretariat.

The Chair asked the SRC Chair to summarise the reasons why SRC felt the Paper should be withdrawn. The SRC Chair made clear that there was no negativity to the principle of supporting Entrepreneurship; but the Paper had a number of issues, which had led SRC to ask for the Paper to be redrafted and represented to SRC for endorsement, before coming to a future Board meeting. An ELT member flagged that the Paper was time critical in respect of utilising external funding.

The Chair reiterated that he was hugely supportive of the 'backbone organisation' concept and the partnership working that had been undertaken with other key players in the ecosystem. The Chair asked that SRC provide the team with detailed feedback and that a revised Paper be developed expediently to address the SRC issues, shared with SRC via correspondence, with the view of having the team present a revised Paper to the January Board.

Action: (i) SRC will provide the team with detailed feedback and (ii) the team would then present a timely, revised paper to SRC, with the intention being that an SRC endorsed Paper would come to the January 2024 Board meeting for approval unless approved by the Board in advance of that meeting, via correspondence.

PAPERS TO NOTE

20. BOARD TRAINING

The Paper was approved as presented. A Board member suggested Finance training would be useful for Board members. The Board Secretary advised that this would be added to the bespoke training programme; but stressed that if training is provided, Board members need to make the effort to attend. An ELT member suggested that perhaps training sessions could be recorded for future use.

21. MONTHLY CORPORATE TARGET PERFORMANCE REPORT

Board members commented that the presentation of the performance report has improved, but still had concerns that there was no clear accountability on remedial actions where targets are falling behind. The Chair stated that it is important to see more detail on any remedial actions in future reporting and again stated that if we are considering surrendering budget, we should have new 'shovel ready' projects available when required. The CEO stated that remedial actions are in train; and teams were actively driving Work in Progress projects. The Board then discussed internal staff resources, how competitive were Invest NI's salary ranges, staff utilisation if Budget was being surrendered, the no. of vacancies, the length of time to get these filled and their affordability. The CEO responded by stating that presently there were 80-90 vacancies across Invest NI, that ELT was reviewing team activity across the organisation with a view to producing an updated Resourcing Plan, but that this was also dependent on the outworkings from the Independent Review Action Plan. The CEO also reminded members that the Board had earlier requested a halt to non-essential recruitment. A Board member queried this, on the basis that the decision had been taken on affordability grounds, but subsequently Invest NI has surrendered funds to DfE. An ELT member highlighted the need to increase nett headcount, i.e. bring in new externally sourced staff and that a large proportion of vacancies were filled internally, which simply created a knock-on impact.

Dominic Darby and Melanie Dawson left the meeting.

22. BUDGET IMPACT OF MAJOR PROJECTS

The Paper was noted with no issues raised.

23. 2024-25 BUDGET

The Paper was noted. Brian Dolaghan confirmed that DfE had commissioned an exercise and advised that the UK Government's decision not to award Shared Prosperity Funding (SPF) to NI would add additional pressures to budget planning. He noted that there would be a budget surrender regarding some major projects which had not secured all required approvals. The Chair made clear that primary responsibility in respect of Budget reporting is to the Board and not DfE. He noted the very challenging future Budget position, that SPF had been handed back to UKG and that this financial year was the third in a row where Invest NI had surrendered funds to DfE. An ELT member stated that he felt there was a disjoin as to what DfE casework panels are looking for when assessing projects. A Board member also agreed that he felt there was a lack of mutual understanding and alignment between Invest NI and DfE on expected outcomes and felt a discussion was warranted at a senior level in DfE to ensure commonality of understanding and purpose when assessing projects.

The Chair stated he understood the frustration and that a shared understanding between Invest NI and DfE on value for money, additionality and mobility was critical and agreed that a meeting should be arranged to discuss further. The CEO added that Invest NI has clear guidance on assessing projects and if there has been a change in policy from DfE, this has not been communicated. The CEO stated he also shared the Board's frustrations and noted that he was still waiting on DfE's response to his February 2023 correspondence on the subject of Start At Your Own Risk (SAYOR) projects, despite him raising this at DfE /Invest NI Oversight & Liaison meetings.

Action: The Chair agreed, that following an initial discussion with Colin Coffey and the CEO, he would speak to the Permanent Secretary to get a shared understanding with the Department, in respect of VfM, Additionality and Mobility re Casework projects.

24. UPDATE ON LOCATION OF NORTH WEST OFFICE

The CEO noted that details re the latest option had only very recently been received and were being considered by the team. The CEO confirmed that he would bring a recommendation to the Board when considerations were completed. A Board member expressed disappointment with the quality of the Paper, as the costing stable simply did not add up.

Action: CEO to revert to Board in January with an updated Paper including a recommendation for approval.

25. PRODUCTIVITY COMPARISON

The Paper was noted. An ELT member noted that KPI data is not easy to collect from companies and that a danger of changing the metric was that the response rate plummets. A Board member queried the metric being proposed and suggested a meeting with an external economist would be useful to discuss the issue, which was agreed. Another Board member highlighted the UK's overall poor international rating in respect of productivity.

26. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Nothing was raised under AOB. The Board meeting ended at 12:55.

27. DATE OF THE NEXT BOARD MEETING

The next Board meeting will be Operational in nature, will commence at 10:15 on Thursday 25 January 2024 and will be held in Invest NI Headquarters, Belfast.

Wendy Savage, December 2023

Chair