

NATIONAL CITIZEN SERVICE TRUST
Minutes of a meeting of the Board of Directors held in person at
The Natural History Museum
Cromwell Rd, South Kensington, London SW7 5BD
on 30 January 2024 between 14:15 - 17:35

Present:	Harris Bokhari OBE (Chair) Mark Gifford (CEO) Catrin Anderson Jessica Evans (Youth Rep) Jonathan Freeman Tristram Mayhew	Duncan McCourt Jacquie Nnochiri Lamin Tarawally (Youth Rep) Deborah Tavana Amanda Timberg Adnan Shafi (Board apprentice)
In attendance:	Amanda Best (Chief Operating Officer) Michael Devlin (Strategic Adviser to the Chair) Kelly Holder (Executive Director, Operations & Transformation) Jo Hutchinson (Executive Director, Digital Products)	Sarah Knight (Head of Governance & Compliance) Sarfraz Nawaz (Executive Director, Finance) Ali Rose (Executive Support Lead) Adrian Ruddock (Executive Director, Digital and Technology) Hannah Stoddart (Executive Director, Strategy and Impact)
Apologies:	Laura Jackson (Govt Rep) Darren Xiberras	

Item 1. Welcome to the Natural History Museum

1.1 Attendees heard an introduction from Dr Douglas Gurr, Director of the Natural History Museum. The session covered characteristics of successful boards in the private, third and ALB sectors.

Item 2. Icebreaker

2.1 The attendees were asked to take part in a short icebreaker.

Item 3. Focus on Youth

3.1 The youth representatives introduced a video from the [Brighton Period Project](#), a group of young people who founded a charitable organisation dedicated to tackling period poverty following their experience on the NCS programme. The video highlighted the impact of the NCS programme not only through the skills participants were able to learn but also on the communities where they live and serve.

3.2 The Youth Representatives were asked to comment on anything they would like to bring to the board's attention. They noted that many young people feel left behind; and that NCS had a role to play in supporting young people to get their voices heard by politicians during a probable general election year, bringing the citizenship aspect of NCS' mission and impact - "helping young people to feel they have an impact on the world" - to the forefront.

Item 4. Welcome and Conflicts of Interest

4.1 Mr Bokhari welcomed board members to the meeting, noting apologies from the government representative, and Mr Xiberras. Conflicts of interest in addition to those included in the conflicts of interest register, were requested; no additional conflicts were declared. New board members Catrin Anderson, Jonathan Freeman and Duncan McCourt, who started their terms on 1 December 2023, were welcomed to their first board meeting. Adnan Shafi, NCST's new board apprentice, was also welcomed. Tristram Mayhew, whose term had been extended for 9 months from 1 December 2023, was welcomed back to the Board.

Item 5. NCS Impact

5.1 The Board was reminded about how NCS delivers impact, through the Strategy, Annual Strategic Plan and underpinning Theory of Change. They heard an overview of how KPIs mapped directly onto the annual strategic plan and were given a summary of performance across all KPIs.

5.2 Despite challenges restricting the ability to recruit during the prime January - April 2023 recruitment window, which had had a knock on effect for NCST in FY 23/24, management had adapted swiftly. Mitigations had been put in place and a strong start to this year's recruitment window meant NCST was on track to hit participation targets.

5.3 The increasingly diverse portfolio offering within NCS was discussed, with different areas spotlighting different areas of impact. For example, while targeted community programmes may not inherently emphasise the 'difference and diversity' aspect of the NCS offer, they are highly focused on providing tailored support to specific geographical areas and harder-to-reach young people (such as young offenders, Looked After Children, Pupil Referral Units, etc.) Cross-promotion across the NCS offer was pivotal to ensure young people were given opportunities to benefit from all facets of NCS impact.

5.4 Going forwards, it would be important to hone in on the interconnected nature of the NCS offer, ensuring young people fully understand how to navigate across the NCS portfolio, while also emphasising the 'choice-based' nature of NCS and need for bespoke interventions for certain young people. There was also interest in isolating the sentiments of young people by service line (and also the impact of these over time as young people become adults). Finally, it would be important to ensure 'NCS' continued to be perceived as a unifying brand and theme throughout the portfolio, nurturing a broader movement and institution that young people felt part of, and could advocate for as alumni and ambassadors.

Action: Board to provide comments on the impact one pager (Hannah Stoddart)

Item 6. CEO Update

6.1 Mr Gifford introduced the CEO update, giving a broad ranging update of activities and priorities across the Trust. Focus areas included continuing to control costs, planning for a likely general election, ensuring FY 22/23 targets were hit while simultaneously planning for a future strategy and CSR submission.

6.2 The Executive were encouraged to promote NCS and engage via external and social channels, especially around personal stories and individual case studies. NCS had a strong story around impact, much to be proud of, and it was important not to miss opportunities to promote this and build the NCS brand.

6.3 As the Trust entered Q3 2023/24, the Trust was forecasting an modest underspend on both Admin and programme spend.

- Administration: the Trust had continued to control costs exceptionally well, particularly on Pay and Travel. This is noteworthy in the first year post transformation and praise was given to the Executive. Admin was expected to be £0.6m - £0.8m underspent and DCMS Finance had been advised who had appreciated proactive engagement from NCST.
- Programme: the underspend on Programme was expected to be less than £0.75m and was largely due to phasing. This had partly been due to NCST not being allowed to spend for the existing financial year until the financial year had started, meaning a key recruitment and activity window had been missed. There had also been delays in standing up grantees and new providers, as working with smaller frontline youth sector organisations requires significant NCST support regarding safeguarding, financial and impact processes. That said, NCST had worked hard to mitigate these risks resulting in a small underspend only and In future years it was not anticipated there would be a material underspend.

It was noted that all ALBs are required to come under budget as exceeding budget is prohibitive. NCST would end the year within 1 - 2 % of its budget which in the first year in delivering a new strategy represents strong performance. The Trust has made a separate case to DCMS to carry over a

reserve this year. The value of the reserve is £0.6m and is money generated by the Trust rather than grant funding from the Government.

The Board noted NCST was not constrained by demand, and had a proven track record of mobilising projects, with a particular ongoing need noted among under-represented groups and the wider youth sector.

6.4 The NCS Board board discussed growth and agreed that this remained a key priority for the board; this would need to be balanced with impact and quality, and ensuring that all young people, including the hardest to reach, continued to experience the benefits of the NCS portfolio.

Item 7. Strategy Development and Board Future Strategy Engagement

7.1 The board discussed the process for developing the strategy for NCS for 2025 and beyond, the key strategic questions associated with this process, and the sources that would be consulted both external and within NCST. Digital was acknowledged as a key underpinning factor in NCST's future strategy development.

7.2 The board agreed that:

- An informal board subgroup would be formed to support NCST in the strategy development process
- Board members would take part in one to one meetings with the Executive during February to provide views
- There would be changes to the March and June boards to facilitate strategy decisions

Item 8. Board Effectiveness Review, Skills Matrix & NED Recruitment Update

8.1 The findings of the board effectiveness review conducted in October 2023 were discussed. The board agreed to put in place a buddy system for new board members, and enhanced training around finance, governance, and managing public money.

8.2 The board was updated on the latest board campaign for 3 NEDs, which was due to go live following ministerial approval. Board members were encouraged to reach out to their networks to support the campaign once live.

Action: Board members to promote NED recruitment campaign

Item 9. Board Governance / Ways of Working

9.1 New governance proposals: The board agreed the following governance proposals:

- The ability to co-opt new members to provide specialist skills and experience.
- The ability to appoint vice chairs (from existing NEDs).
- Merging impact into board level discussions and removing the impact committee.
- To keep ARC and Safeguarding as two separate committees.

9.2 The board approved the governance manual which included new areas such as board responsibilities and roles.

9.3 Ms Anderson, Mr McCourt and Mr Freeman were approved to join the following committees with immediate effect: People and Remuneration; Audit and Risk and Safeguarding, respectively.

9.4 The Board agreed to co-opt Ndidi Okezie onto the Board effective immediately as an external advisor. The Board agreed that Mr Mayhew would be co-opted onto the board following the end of his current extended 9 month term.

Item 10. Regular Governance

10.1 The board minutes from 3 October 2023 were approved.

10.2 The minutes of the People and Remuneration Committee, 15th June 2023 (approved 7.11.2023)

APPROVED SIGNED

were noted. The minutes from ARC, 14th September 2023 (approved 9.11.2023), were noted.

10.3 The board action log was noted and all actions were closed.

10.4 An overview of business was given from the Youth Advisory Board and board committees.

10.5 There were no policies for the board to approve. The following policies were notified:

- ARC approved: Expenses Policy (9.11.23)
- ARC notified: Acceptable Use Policy; Commercial Readiness Strategy (9.11.23)
- People & RemCo approved: Remuneration Policy (7.11.23) - no change
- People & RemCo notified: IR25 Policy, Menopause Policy, Parental Bereavement policy (7.11.23)

Item 11. AOB: There were no items of AOB.

Item 12. Private NED Session: The NEDs were invited to have a private discussion with the chair.

The meeting closed at 5.45pm.

Signed by the Chair:



Date signed: 24th April, 2024

NATIONAL CITIZEN SERVICE TRUST

Board meeting 3 October 2023 - Action schedule for noting

Action Schedule

Actions from 30 January 2024

Min	Action	By whom?	Status
5	Board to provide comments on the impact one pager	Board	Open
8	Board members to promote NED recruitment campaign	Board	Open