# **THE HERITAGE COUNCIL**

## DRAFT REPORT OF MEETING

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**Via Zoom**

##### NBDC Taskforce Committee

##### May 7th, 2021

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**PRESENT**

Geraldine Tallon – Chairperson

Michael Parsons

Michael Farrell

Dr John Patrick Greene

Catriona Ryan

Donald Hobern

Ciaran O’Keeffe

Virginia Teehan

Anne Barcoe

**1. INTRODUCTION**The Chairperson opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and thanking them for the preparatory work circulated for this meeting.

**2. Minutes of the last meeting on 9th April 2021**

**Noted**: That the minutes of the last meeting of the NBDC Taskforce on April 9th were proposed by Michael Parsons, seconded by Catriona Ryan and adopted.

**3. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

**4. Briefing from Department of Housing, Local Government, Heritage**

**4i Structural approach and Legal issues**

**Noted**: That C. Ryan briefed the committee on the verbal Legal advice received in relation to the structural approach and the establishment of a Company Limited by Guarantee (CLG). She also briefed the members on the history of the establishment of the Irish Heritage Trust through the Companies act as a comparator exercise to this process.

**Noted**: That the process of establishing CLG would be to:

* Submit a Memo to Govt. seeking approval for the establishment of a Company Limited by Guarantee (not having share capital) for the purposes of collecting and recording of biodiversity data.
* If Govt approval given then the taskforce to proceed to determine the composition of the first Board of the new Company as well as the Constitution, Memorandum and Articles of Association and details of governance arrangements, etc and submit to Government for approval
* The Directors to incorporate the company - lodge the Memorandum and Articles of Association for the Company with the Companies Registration Office.

This would be followed by the advertising and appointment of a CEO, ahead of staff recruitment. Matters of funding, accommodation etc also to be considered by taskforce as it progresses.

**Noted**: That the committee felt that this would be the best way to progress.

**Agreed**: That G. Tallon, V. Teehan and C. Ryan would meet with the Minister and head of Dept in parallel to progress with discussion on the process of taking this proposal to government and identify what is required to get approvement in principal as a first step.

**4ii** **NPWS priorities for a new structure**

**Noted**: That C. O’Keeffe briefed the committee on the NPWS requirements of the NBDC outlining that it should first and foremost serve as a national hub for the collation, validation, storage, display and dissemination of biodiversity data so as to document the entire wild species resource and potentially to track change over time. He added the importance of the core work not being impacted by expansion into new work areas, and that new work is appropriately resourced so as to enable core work to proceed.

**Noted:** That inconsidering a future operation model, NPWS would like to ensure that the Data Centre continues to be agile in its performance; retains trust among its key asset, the data providers many of whom are voluntary experts; has certainty around long term funding which could be threatened at times of shortage of funding; and the costs of the service it provides are not substantially increased due to additional management functions.

**5. NBDC and lessons from the international context**

**Noted**: That D. Hobern and P. Greene briefed the committee on the application of lessons from the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) and other biodiversity initiatives at an international level to the future needs and direction for the NBDC. They highlighted the following areas:

* A cross-sectoral role
* The importance of sustainability and trust
* Relationship between NBDC and GBIF

**Noted**: That the committee agreed this information was very valuable and would be a very useful tool to support the committee with the fundamental requirements to progress with a framework.

**6. Next steps**

* Meeting with Dept official in parallel with meeting the Minister to progress discussions
* Preparation of high level confidential interim report to go to the Heritage Council Board on June 24th outlining the recommended approach of the taskforce
* Schedule a workplan for the detail issues in second half of this year

**7. Schedule of Meetings**

**Noted**: That A. Barcoe will reschedule the next meeting in June to ensure that it suits all members of the Committee and revert back with the date asap.

**Any Other Business**

There was no further business and the meeting concluded at 1pm.