

# Centre for Cross – Border Studies

(company limited by guarantee)

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## Trustees' report for the year ended 31 July 2024

The Trustees present their report and the audited financial statements for the year ended 31 July 2024.

The information with respect to the Trustees set out on page 1 forms part of this report. The financial statements comply with Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008, as amended by the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2013, the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015, the Companies Act 2006, the Memorandum and Articles of Association, and Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standards applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102).

### Structure, governance and management

The Centre for Cross-Border Studies ("CCBS" or "the charitable company") is a company limited by guarantee and as such is governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association. The charitable company prepares and files annual accounts with Companies House.

The company has charitable tax status (reference number: XR31047). The charitable company registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland in September 2015 and its Charity number is NIC 102197. The Governing Body of the charitable company is its Board of Trustees, who are responsible for the strategic direction of the Centre and meet four times a year. The day-to-day operational control is delegated to an employee, carrying the title Director, who is also in attendance at all meetings of the Board. The charitable company operates in an environment which promotes equality, tolerance and mutual respect.

### Members

The members of the charitable company during the year, as set out in the revised Articles of Association are as follows:

The Queen's University of Belfast;  
Dublin City University

In line with the Articles of Association the Trustees are as follows:

### Trustees

Mr Peter Osborne	Chairperson
Dr Maurice Manning	Resigned 13 <sup>th</sup> September 2024
Mr Philip McDonagh	
Mr Earl Storey	Resigned 14 <sup>th</sup> January 2025
Dr Walt Kilroy	
Ms Emer O'Gorman	Resigned 14 <sup>th</sup> January 2025
Professor John Doyle	Resigned 14 <sup>th</sup> January 2025
Sir David Sterling	
Professor John Garry	Resigned 2 <sup>nd</sup> September 2024
Ms Elodie Fabre	
Ms Olwen Dawe	
Ms Eileen Weir	Commenced 1st January 2025
Ms Laura Mahoney	Commenced 14 <sup>th</sup> January 2025
Dr Ryan Feeney	Commenced 2 <sup>nd</sup> September 2024
Mr Markus Pauli	Commenced 1 <sup>st</sup> January 2025
Mr John Quinlivan	Commenced 20 <sup>th</sup> January 2025

Of the Trustees, four are nominated by both Queen's University Belfast and Dublin City University. In addition, up to four additional Trustees can be co-opted by the Board.

The respective members were involved in drafting the Articles of Association and have nominated their institutional representatives to the Board on this basis.

The current Board Members were fully briefed on the Centre for Cross-Border Studies mission and activities and were advised of their legal responsibilities as outlined in the Articles of Association.

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## **Trustees' report for the year ended 31 July 2024 (continued)**

### **Structure, governance and management (continued)**

#### **Trustees (continued)**

The Centre for Cross-Border Studies has developed an induction programme for new Board Members, as part of which they receive a copy of the Board Members Handbook and are advised of their legal responsibility and requirements in regard to the code of conduct and conflict of interest. A skills audit is maintained and reviewed. The skills audit is used to inform the recruitment of new Board Members.

The related parties are set out in note 18. These include the members and other organisations where the trustees have declared an interest.

As the governing body of the charitable company, the Board has the responsibility for maintaining a sound system of internal control that supports the achievement of the charitable company's policies, aims and objectives, whilst safeguarding sponsors' funds and assets for which they are responsible. The system of internal control is designed to manage rather than eliminate risk, and to that extent it can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify the principal risks to the achievement of policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the nature and extent of those risks and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically. The accounting services for the charitable company are provided by Queen's University Belfast and a review of the effectiveness of internal control is undertaken by the University's Internal Auditors as part of their rolling audit plan. This involves the provision of an independent opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the system of internal control, with recommendations for improvement. The Board is satisfied that there is an ongoing process for identifying, evaluating and managing the charitable company's significant risks.

Trustees do not receive remuneration for their role within the charitable company.

#### **Risk management**

The Trustees have overall responsibility for ensuring that the charitable company has in place an appropriate system of controls, financial and otherwise, to provide reasonable assurance that:

- the charitable company is operating efficiently and effectively;
- its assets are safeguarded against unauthorised use or disposition;
- proper records are maintained, and financial information used within the charitable company or for publication is reliable;
- the charitable company complies with relevant laws and regulations; and
- the charitable company's systems of financial control are designed to provide reasonable, but not absolute assurance against material misstatement or loss.

The primary risks associated with the Centre are in respect of financial sustainability. The Centre has well established and comprehensive controls in place to manage these risks including; comprehensive financial reporting and forecasting processes; a well-established team with considerable expertise and knowledge; and an established strategic planning process.

### **Objectives and activities/public benefit**

The Mission of the Centre for Cross-Border Studies is to empower citizens and build capacity and capability for cooperation across sectors and jurisdictional boundaries on the island of Ireland and further afield. This mission is achieved through research, expertise, partnership and experience in a wide range of cross-border practices and concerns.

The public benefit of the Centre is in the advancement of practical cooperation and mutual understanding between Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland as part of the movement towards peace and reconciliation on the island.

The Centre for Cross-Border Studies researches and develops co-operation across the Irish border in a wide range of practical areas, notably education, health, the economy, ICT and citizens' information, and works with similar cross-border regional research bodies in other parts of Europe.

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## Trustees' report for the year ended 31 July 2024 (continued)

### Objectives and activities/public benefit (continued)

The Centre has a specific and unique role in contributing to the increased social, economic and territorial cohesion of the island of Ireland through:

- Promoting and improving the quality of cross-border cooperation between public bodies, and between public bodies, business and civil society;
- Improving the capacity of people involved in social and economic development of the island to engage in mutually beneficial cross-border cooperation; and
- Addressing information gaps and other barriers that constrain cross-border mobility and cross-border cooperation through research and provision of resources, tools and other practical support.

The Centre has developed a comprehensive strategy covering a range of activities designed to achieve its mission, specifically, the main activities of the Centre in the reporting period have included:

- Preparation and holding of CCBS 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference
- Research and dissemination of research findings
- Delivery of Secretariat Services for Universities Ireland (UI) and SCoTENS
- Journal of Cross Border Studies in Ireland
- Networking, Advocacy and Promotion of Cross-border Cooperation in Ireland and Europe
- Representation of CCBS on outside bodies
- Presentations to conferences and seminars, organised by CCBS and others
- Training, mentoring and information services
- Submission to public policy consultations and representation on advisory bodies

### Achievements and performance

The statement of financial activities for the charitable company is set out on page 12.

The Trustees regularly review performance against a number of key criteria to ensure it continues to achieve its key aims and objectives. These measures include addressing information gaps and promoting and improving cross border cooperation.

Key achievements during the twelve months covered by this financial report include:

- **CCBS 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference**
  - *Preparation of the Centre's 24th Annual Conference, which took place on 14<sup>th</sup> September 2023*
  - *Preparation of 2024 edition of CCBS Annual Conference, to take place in September 2024*
- **Research and dissemination of research findings**
  - *Review of cross-border mobility (CBPES)*
  - *Accelerating Growth: Progressing globally ambitious sectoral clusters on the island of Ireland*
  - *Department of Foreign Affairs Reconciliation Fund Strategic Partnership programme (including quarterly surveys on North-South and East-West cooperation)*
  - *The Windsor Framework and North-South cooperation and relations*
- **Secretariat services to Universities Ireland and the Standing Conference of Teacher Education North and South (SCoTENS), including the organisation of major all-island conferences, Scholars at Risk events; management of Scholarships and Bursaries schemes; North-South Student Teacher Exchange; SCoTENS seed funding programme.**
- **Participation in Transfrontier Euro Institute Network**
  - *Jean Monnet Network: FRONTIER*
- **Continued membership of European Citizen Access Service**
- **Journal of Cross Border Studies in Ireland**
  - *Issue 18 launched 14 Sept 2023*
- **Presentations to conferences and seminars, organised by CCBS and others**

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## Trustees' report for the year ended 31 July 2024 (continued)

### Achievements and performance (continued)

- **Training, mentoring and information services**
  - CCBS website updated and maintained
  - Border People website updated and maintained
  - Border People Advisory Meetings
  - Border People training for advice workers
  - Border-Zine
  - Press and media interviews
- **Submission to public policy consultations**
  - Written submissions to Government and public policy consultations in Ireland, Northern Ireland and EU.
  - Evidence to Parliamentary enquiries: Westminster and Dublin

### Financial review

During the year an amount of £393,294 (2023: £338,595) was received in grants, together with other income totalling £324,133 (2023: £292,273). After expenditure of £671,081 (2023: £621,606), the net income for the year amounted to £46,346 (2023: £9,262). Funds of £994,502 (2023: £948,156) were carried forward at 31 July 2024, of which £461,217 (2023: £438,567) related to restricted funds, i.e. funds which have been awarded by sponsors for a specific purpose and cannot be utilised for any other general purpose.

The Centre's main funders during the period include government departments which support core activities including those listed in the achievements and performance section above. In addition the Centre receives membership funds from the members of Universities Ireland and SCoTENS.

### Reserves policy

The charitable company's policy is to retain a level of free reserves which matches the needs of the organisation both at the current time and in the foreseeable future. Its reserves policy is that necessary funds are retained for statutory liabilities and the remainder are to be expended within a rolling 36 months, which the Trustees consider appropriate to the charitable company's circumstances and the timing of funding and expenditure. The charitable company has free reserves of £533,285 (2023: £509,589) relating to grants received for core funds, funding for the provision of administrative and training services and other sundry income. The charitable company's reserves policy is reviewed annually. Free reserves are total funds, excluding restricted funds. The Trustees are satisfied with the year-end financial position and with the prospects for 2024-25. The main sources of funding are government grants and funding in respect of the provision of secretariat services.

### Plans for future years

The CCBS Strategic Statement of Mission, Values and Strategic Goals provide the overall context for the Centre's planned activities going forward, while the Centre's Strategic Plan sets out objectives for the period 2022-2025. The Strategic Plan has three strategic priorities: strengthening the knowledge base for cooperation and cross-border mobility; promoting the development of policies that exploit and are supportive of cooperation and cross-border mobility; and building and strengthening collaborative relations within and across these islands and beyond. We expect additionally, that CCBS activities will continue to be shaped by the economic, social and political impacts arising from the UK's departure from the European Union.

In the short-term (2024-2025), complementing the Centre's strategic priorities, its activities will not only fulfil the commitments made to the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science as providers of core funding, but also those relating to the Centre's Strategic Partnership with the Department of Foreign Affairs' Reconciliation Fund. Under the Strategic Partnership, in 2024-2025, as well as the continuation of a secondment of an Information Officer under Border People, the activities to be undertaken fall under two overarching components: research to assess the ongoing status of conditions for cooperation and cross-border mobility; and outreach to build and maintain confidence for cooperation and cross-border mobility. Among the specific activities to be undertaken by the Centre in 2024-25 are the undertaking of quarterly surveys on the conditions for North-South and East-West cooperation, research on cross-border mobility, the continued convening of the Ad-Hoc Group for North-South and East-West Cooperation, and the continued promotion of the New Common Charter for Cooperation Within and Across these Islands.

The Strategic Partnership with the Reconciliation Fund is due to end in April 2025, therefore one of the Centre's essential priorities will be to identify alternative sources of funding for its activities. However, the latter part of 2024 will be shaped in

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## Trustees' report for the year ended 31 July 2024 (continued)

### Plans for future years (continued)

light of the fact that the Centre will celebrate its 25<sup>th</sup> year in September 2024, with the implementation bodies established under Strand 2 of the Good Friday Agreement celebrating their 25<sup>th</sup> anniversaries in December 2024. Therefore, our plans for that year will also focus on celebrating the achievements of North-South cooperation since 1998.

Going forward into 2024-2025, the CCBS Board will continue to support the organisation and its staff in efforts to ensure the Centre maintains its profile and reputation for high-quality research as it operates in a post-Brexit and post-restructuring environment. This will include maintaining the Border People project's importance within the Centre's core activities, and ensuring CCBS continues to provide the highest standards of service to SCoTENS and Universities Ireland.

The financial sustainability of CCBS will continue to be a strategic goal and priority. In particular, efforts will be made to identify both project and core funding sources and to secure new funding streams.

### Statement as to disclosure to our auditors

In so far as the trustees are aware at the time of approving the Trustees' Annual Report:

- there is no relevant information, being information needed by the auditor in connection with preparing their report, of which the charitable company's auditor is unaware; and
- the Trustees, having made enquiries of fellow trustees and the auditor that they ought to have individually taken, have each taken all the steps that they ought to have taken as trustees to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the auditor is aware of that information.

### Political donations

No donations for political purposes were made during the current and preceding year.

### Trustees' indemnities

As permitted by the Articles of Association, the Trustees have the benefit of an indemnity which is a qualifying third party indemnity provision as defined by Section 234 of the Companies Act 2006. The indemnity was in force throughout the financial year and is currently in force.

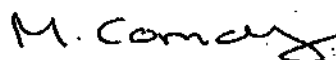
### Small companies' exemption

In preparing the Trustees' Report, the trustees have taken the small companies exemption under section 414(B) of the Companies Act 2006 (Strategic Report and Trustees' Report) Regulations 2013, not to prepare a Strategic Report for presentation with these financial statements. The report has been prepared in accordance with the special provisions relating to small companies with part 15 of the Companies Act 2006.

### Independent auditors

Pursuant to Section 487 of the Companies Act 2006, the auditors will be deemed to be reappointed and KPMG will therefore continue in office.

By order of the Board



Mrs Margaret Connolly  
Company Secretary  
Date: 24 April 2025

