

COMPANY REGISTRATION NUMBER: NI675600  
CHARITY REGISTRATION NUMBER: NIC108291

**Environmental Justice Network Ireland Ltd**  
**Company Limited by Guarantee**  
**Unaudited Financial Statements**  
**31 December 2023**

# **Environmental Justice Network Ireland Ltd**

**Company Limited by Guarantee**

## **Financial Statements**

**Year ended 31 December 2023**

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# Environmental Justice Network Ireland Ltd

## Company Limited by Guarantee

### Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report)

#### Year ended 31 December 2023

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The trustees, who are also the directors for the purposes of company law, present their report and the unaudited financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 December 2023.

#### Reference and administrative details

**Registered charity name** Environmental Justice Network Ireland Ltd

**Charity registration number** NIC108291

**Company registration number** NI675600

**Principal office and registered office** Ormeau Baths  
Ormeau Avenue  
Belfast  
BT2 8HS  
Northern Ireland

#### The trustees

Ms V Cirefice	
Mr R Blackwood	(Resigned 23 February 2023)
Dr P Doran	(Resigned 1 November 2023)
Ms B McNeill	
Mr S Wood	
Mrs C Bailey	(Appointed 10 January 2024)

**Company secretary** Dr Ciara Brennan

**Independent examiner** Finegan Gibson Ltd

# **Environmental Justice Network Ireland Ltd**

## **Company Limited by Guarantee**

### **Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)***

**Year ended 31 December 2023**

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#### **Structure, governance and management**

The Environmental Justice Network Ireland was launched in June 2019 to create a collaborative platform for partnership working between academics, representatives of civil society and environmental NGOs. EJNI's core goal is to address the root causes of social and environmental justice deficits on the island of Ireland. EJNI is delivering this goal through an innovative, transdisciplinary model of collaboration which draws together diverse stakeholders and decision-makers who usually operate in almost completely separate spheres to enhance knowledge exchange and facilitate more effective and strategic research, advocacy and action. EJNI now has an extensive network of members drawn from academia, lawyers, NGOs and community activists from across the island of Ireland and beyond who work together to deliver unique, cutting-edge collaborative environmental justice projects.

EJNI is an independent, non-profit network, existing and acting in the public interest. The organisation currently has a Board of Trustees which provides oversight and makes core decisions. Co-ordination of its projects is led by the Director and Steering Group, which is comprised of voluntary representatives from academia, the NGO and legal sectors and grassroots community activism drawn from its wider network. Its primary activities centre on three key areas: (i) Research: the creation and dissemination of evidence-based, multi-media resources to help enhance knowledge about environmental and social justice issues which impact citizens on the island of Ireland and beyond; (ii) Advocacy: empowering and campaigning support activities relating to environmental injustices; (iii) Action: the provision of a unique platform for collaborative online and in-person activism and action designed to enhance cooperation between diverse stakeholders and across borders.



# Environmental Justice Network Ireland Ltd

## Company Limited by Guarantee

### Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

#### Year ended 31 December 2023

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

###### ***Trustees and decision-making***

EJNI is driven and overseen by a Board of Trustees and supported by a Steering Group that sits within a transdisciplinary, cooperative 'community of practice'. The aim is a highly structured system of distributed decision making, producing high quality outputs efficiently and democratically through a cooperative model based on (i) core operations and (ii) collaborative projects (as described below). The Board of Trustees is responsible for overall performance, governance and policy. It is currently comprised of 4 individuals. Trustees will be elected and appointed by the Interim Board and Company Secretary with consideration of advice from Steering Group members. The appointed board will be representative and reflect the ethos of the organisation. In December 2023, the board is comprised of: Simon Wood, Bróna McNeill, Clare Bailey and V'Cenza Cirefice. Dr Ciara Brennan (Director, EJNI) is company secretary. The Steering Group is comprised of members of the network and EJNI staff, with a maximum of 15 participants. It meets regularly and is representative of the diverse different types of stakeholders EJNI works with.

###### ***Staff and Remuneration***

During 2023 EJNI's core activities continued to be funded by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust (grant for core funding ran from Oct 2021- September 2023, and was renewed in June 2023 for a further 3 years) to support a small team of part-time staff to deliver its core operations and support and coordinate its collaborative projects (detailed below). EJNI staff and steering group members may hold multiple roles within the organisation (with the exception of board members, who cannot be salaried employees), e.g. staff members may also be involved in collaborative projects as consultants.

Director: Ciara Brennan

Research Officer: Caitlin McIlhennon

Research Assistant: Shea Anderson

IT and web support: Phillip Lock and John Burns

Remuneration for these staff members in their core roles was agreed by the board on the basis of academic payscales for lecturer and research assistant (in light of the qualifications and the previous roles of the staff members) and with consideration of NJC payscales. For project consultancy work, daily rates are negotiated with funders on a project-by-project basis.

###### ***Relationships with related parties***

Bróna McNeill (Trustee and member of the steering group) is sister to Ciara Brennan (Director). Phillip Lock (IT and web support) is husband to Ciara Brennan.

# Environmental Justice Network Ireland Ltd

## Company Limited by Guarantee

### Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

**Year ended 31 December 2023**

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#### **Objectives and activities**

EJNI'S growing network of academics, lawyers, NGOs and grassroots community activists in Northern Ireland and across the island of Ireland are working together with partners across the EU to respond to environmental and social injustice. EJNI defines 'environmental justice' as the prevention of unfairly distributed environmental harms and the establishment of procedures to ensure that concerned citizens and public interest groups can access the justice system at reasonable cost; be provided with a fair platform for the treatment of environmental issues; and obtain adequate and effective remedies for breaches of environmental law.

- EJNI will contribute to the ongoing transformation of the Northern Ireland conflict through:
  - empowering citizens to address root causes of environmental injustice - namely the de-prioritization of environmental protection and social justice during the conflict
  - contributing to peace-building efforts by providing a platform for collaboration between diverse stakeholders but also between groups and individuals from all communities in Northern Ireland
  - promoting cross-border cooperation on the island of Ireland through the development of cooperative solutions to shared environmental challenges
- EJNI's core mission and operations are underpinned by the principles and values of participation, human rights and equality. Public participation is one of the central tenets of the UNECE Convention on Access to Environmental Justice. The right to a healthy environment is increasingly recognised as the basis for a wide range of legal interventions centred on environmental justice claims. Finally, equality, diversity & inclusivity considerations have informed the development of the organisation since its establishment.
- EJNI's activities are designed to encourage the development of a non-sectarian political culture which is inclusive, transparent, responsive and accountable. It will do this through supporting and equipping communities with the knowledge they need to create a vibrant, pluralist and activist civil society, responsive to the needs of the most vulnerable and able to hold the government to account for environmental and connected social justice failures

EJNI's work will help provide a platform for voices from community activist groups which have been marginalised groups in the context of public policy-making in relation to the environment and social justice in Northern Ireland. Through joint-working between communities, NGOs, lawyers and academics to produce evidence-based resources, events and advocacy activities, EJNI will help cultivate the independence of the community and voluntary sectors. EJNI's work has already, and will continue to develop projects that promote increased participation of women in processes which will help influence political decision-making and also greater inclusivity in political decision-making and policy work.

EJNI's work will fulfil three central charitable purposes:

(i) to promote, for the benefit of the public, access to environmental justice by supporting communities, individuals and organisations that are engaged in challenging environmental injustice on the island of Ireland and providing a platform for collaboration between these groups; (ii) to promote, for the benefit of the public, the advancement of education about environmental justice concerns on the island of Ireland and how these relate to global environmental, economic and societal debates; and (iii) to carry out or assist in the carrying out of research into environmental justice and to publish or otherwise disseminate the results of such research on the island of Ireland and across the world for the benefit of the public.

EJNI will achieve its goal of enhancing environmental justice on the island of Ireland through

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# **Environmental Justice Network Ireland Ltd**

## **Company Limited by Guarantee**

### **Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)***

#### **Year ended 31 December 2023**

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addressing the root causes of environmental injustice through three central areas of activity:

- Research: the creation and dissemination of evidence-based, multi-media resources to help enhance knowledge about environmental and social justice issues which impact citizens on the island of Ireland and beyond.
- Advocacy: empowering and campaigning support activities relating to environmental injustices.
- Action: the provision of a unique platform for collaborative online and in-person activism and action designed to enhance cooperation between diverse stakeholders and across borders.

In terms of timescale, EJNI has a range of short-, medium- and long-term goals. In the short term, the goal of the organisation is to continue to develop its network, profile, administrative and working practices and acquire additional core funding to support a growing team of staff in line with the scale of our operations - which have increased again during 2023. In the medium term, EJNI will focus on the development of its 4 core projects: Rights and Nature; Access to Justice; Climate Governance and Linking the Irish Environment. In the long term, EJNI will continue to develop new project streams within a broader strategy for addressed environmental and the connected social injustice on the island of Ireland. This strategy will be developed in partnership with EJNI's network of partners from the island of Ireland but also in consultation with other environmental justice networks and bodies from other jurisdictions (in particular from post-conflict societies).

# Environmental Justice Network Ireland Ltd

## Company Limited by Guarantee

### Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

#### Year ended 31 December 2023

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##### Objectives and activities *(continued)*

##### **Risks**

- The return to physical events in the post-pandemic environmental justice arena has been slow. Our response to this has been to blend in-person events with the production of a range of online alternatives which have been highly successful, including hybrid meetings, a series of collaborative film projects, webinars, interactive briefing papers and online dialogues and the development of a social media and communications strategy which is focused on digital activities and advocacy events. We have minimised costs of operating a physical office by taking up a resident desk in a co-working space - so we do not have wastage or unnecessary overheads associated with a full private office. In addition, our working patterns are flexible to ensure equality of opportunity and participation for parents and those with caring responsibilities.
- Unprecedented levels of political uncertainty in Northern Ireland and the controversial nature of some of the issues which will be raised during projects (e.g. the extent & nature of cross-border collaboration on the environment) can render building trust between stakeholders & ensuring active participation difficult. We have employed mechanisms used to build trust in collaborative projects, such as building on existing relationships, use of intermediaries & guarantors & building trust through the project itself to offset this risk. Stakeholders are always consulted about anonymity & confidentiality requirements at the outset of each EJNI project and where relevant a full ethical approval process is completed via the academic institutions associated with each project.
- Difficulties developing a common 'language' that cross-disciplinary groups & non-academic stakeholders can engage with and dealing with disagreements between collaborative working partners are addressed in EJNI projects through our use of accessible language and the early identification of themes which draw together commonalities raised by participants. This is essential when projects deal with contentious issues, especially those which may have political ramifications in Northern Ireland.
- Duplication of efforts in an already busy and underfunded environmental sector are avoided by EJNI through careful scoping and mapping studies at the outset of each core activity or collaborative project. These efforts have typically led to new cooperative relationships with organisations or individuals engaged in complementary work.
- Difficulty securing collaborative project funding has not to date been an issue, with all of our current collaborative projects (designed to address existing knowledge/support deficits) attracting funding or in-kind support (details on request).

# Environmental Justice Network Ireland Ltd

## Company Limited by Guarantee

### Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

#### Year ended 31 December 2023

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##### **Achievements and performance**

EJNI has had significant successes across all three of our central objectives:

- One of the central goals of EJNI's work is to enhance knowledge and raise awareness of environmental justice issues. To fulfil this goal and to document the work and impact of the organisation: (i) EJNI's accessible, certified green website acts as a repository for all of our collaborative work - all of which is open access; (ii) rigorous proofing of outputs for accessibility and readability occurs; (iii) dedicated project pages on our website (e.g. our Rights and Nature project page) include descriptions of the project and all outputs associated with it, instructions on how to get involved with advocacy and links to other resources; (iv) different multimedia formats are used to reflect project findings & to maximise interest and accessibility; and (v) novel techniques to communicate research findings are adopted (e.g. dance, poetry, music as well as legal, technical and political analysis, e.g. our film projects).
- Evaluation and peer-review is critical in collaborative, transdisciplinary work when stakeholders from very diverse backgrounds are working together on a project. EJNI has developed a systematic peer-review process whereby outputs for each project comply with production guidelines and pass through an independent review and quality assurance process. Each project is also screened for accessibility and equality issues at design stage, ensuring that we are constantly engaged in strengthening human rights and equality through how we do our work, and in turn supporting inclusive, non-sectarian and participatory politics in all of EJNI's activities.
- Dissemination of our work is delivered via (i) email updates about outputs to our extensive network of associates who in turn disseminate the work to their own networks; (ii) our online presence, e.g. our twitter accounts and website; and (iii) press releases to local and national media. The work of EJNI is making a difference to a number of beneficiary groups in Northern Ireland, the border counties and across the island of Ireland (the impact of our projects is also registering across the EU and our outputs are used by international audiences). Benefits have been generated for: (i) collaborating project partners through highlighting their work to a wider audience; (ii) environmental NGOs & activists (particularly small community groups) through networking/engagement/co-production opportunities and through our provision of advocacy tools; (iii) politicians & policy makers benefit from the production of evidence-based research (notably our impact on discussions around the NI Protocol through our 'Linking the Irish Environment' Report which was launched in June 2023; and (iv) local communities & the wider public - through education and raising awareness of environmental injustices, environmental and access to justice rights of communities and individuals, and by giving agency to environmental concerns, EJNI's work is helping shift perceptions of the consequences of weak environmental governance & the need for effective accountability mechanisms. This is demonstrated in the web metrics for both EJNI's website and the Manual of Environmental Justice (over 1300 page views per month as of February 2023). Important wider impacts include enhancing public support for higher environmental ambition (e.g. our Rights and Nature work is translating into successful council motions and proposals for legal reform and through the convening work of our Climate Governance Observatory) and building community cohesion through highlighting the work of community activists in protecting natural heritage, e.g. through our two movement-tracking Rights of Nature films which have been screened by communities across the island of Ireland.
- We have coordinated significant collaborative efforts with other network bodies both on the island of Ireland and with EU partners, (e.g. Northern Ireland Environment Link and Irish Environmental Network, EEB, CAN-E) - with our Linking the Irish Environment Report prompting co-signed letters to the UK and Irish Governments and directly informing the development of the first all-island environmental civic form. Our work is also having significant international impact, featuring in the UN's Aarhus Convention Compliance Committee's progress report on state aid.

All of these outputs and details of our events are hosted on our website, [www.ejni.net](http://www.ejni.net).

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# Environmental Justice Network Ireland Ltd

## Company Limited by Guarantee

### Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

Year ended 31 December 2023

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#### Achievements and performance *(continued)*

**Advocacy:** we have engaged in wide-ranging, impactful and empowering support activities for campaigns relating to environmental justice - including the translation of research into accessible formats and new advocacy tools. Highlights include:

- Our 'Manual of Environmental Justice' - a major new web resource developed in partnership with Community Law and Mediation. We engaged in needs assessment research to identify gaps in the support and information currently available to communities facing environmental injustice on both sides of the border in Ireland to inform the design of the Manual website, addressing identified gaps through three key functionalities: (i) an expert directory - connecting environmental expertise to communities/ campaigners/organisations as a direct response to our research which indicated that 78% of participants believed a lack of accessibility to information and/or expertise was an obstacle to carrying out their work; (ii) an advocacy map - our analysis indicated fragmentation of resources and knowledge across the island of Ireland, and our map allows organisations and communities to connect and share knowledge on similar work/campaigns by pinning submissions to a virtual map where users can investigate further the work/projects being carried out by communities facing similar challenges; and (iii) a resource library - an extensive library of resources covering a broad range of environmental issues. In the three months since the website launched in November 2022, we have added over 100 subscribers to our quarterly newsletter and this number is growing as our directory, map and library expand.
- Our Environmental Justice Calendar promotes events (online, in-person and hybrid) as well as details of government consultations and opportunities for citizens to engage in public participation in environmental justice decision-making. We dedicate time to searching and adding new events and consultations to the calendar but have also created a function for communities and other organisations to add their own events - creating cross-pollination between academics, lawyers, and civil society. We have featured over 200 events or consultations since 2021.

**Action:** EJNI has developed into a unique convening platform for collaborative online and in-person activism and action designed to enhance cooperation between diverse stakeholders and across borders to deliver strategic, real-world impact.

- Launch of our 'Linking the Irish Environment' Report at our stakeholder networking event with NIEL and IEN in June 2023
- Launch of Strategic Climate Litigation Report
- Administration of a Rights of Nature monthly hub
- Convening of a monthly NECP working group
- Briefing to the Irish Consulate in Edinburgh on the LIE report findings
- Environmental Protestors and Riverwalk events in June 2023
- Briefing on Lough Neagh's future ownership, presentation to Belfast City Council in support of successful motion. Follow up activity and briefing councillors.

All of these outputs and details of our events are hosted on our website, [www.ejni.net](http://www.ejni.net).



# Environmental Justice Network Ireland Ltd

## Company Limited by Guarantee

### Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

Year ended 31 December 2023

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#### Achievements and performance *(continued)*

##### **Public Benefit**

Our main activities and who we try to help are described below. Our charitable activities involve supporting communities, individuals and organisations through undertaking and publishing accessible research in response to stakeholder needs, undertaking advocacy around key environmental justice issues and taking direct action in collaboration with partners through engaging in public consultation processes to help challenge environmental injustice on the island of Ireland. EJNI provides a platform for collaboration between diverse stakeholder groups to promote the advancement of education about environmental justice concerns on the island of Ireland and how these relate to global environmental, economic and societal debates through production of multimedia resources and convening of key events such as roundtables, workshops and conferences. EJNI also carries out high quality, peer-reviewed research into environmental justice and we disseminate the results of such research on the island of Ireland and across the world for the benefit of the public. All of these activities are undertaken to further our charitable purposes for the public benefit.

We have referred to the guidance contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing our aim and objectives and in planning our future activities. In particular, the trustees consider how planned activities will contribute to the aims and objectives they have set.

##### **Financial review**

EJNI continues to receive Core Funding from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust with our latest grant of £207,000 running from October 2023 for three years. ECF continues to be our primary project funder and we have significantly expanded the scope of our ECF-funded projects in 2023, with a new project focusing on strategic litigation attracting significant interest from stakeholders north and south of the border. Our main project with ECF has been renewed for 2024/25. We were also commissioned by the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission to undertake a project examining the impact of Brexit on environmental rights, and received a small top-up grant from Community Foundation Ireland to maintain our work on the Manual of Environmental Justice.

##### **Reserves policy and going concern**

Reserves are needed to bridge the timing gap between spending and receiving of income and to cover unplanned temporary shortfalls in income should they arise. Holding adequate reserves safeguards the provision of our services in the event of unexpected significant financial pressures. The trustees consider that the ideal level of reserves would be between three months of core expenditure which would come to approximately £15,000.

Unrestricted reserves freely available to spend, therefore excluding fixed assets, restricted reserves and designated reserves amounted to £19,079 which is above target, the trustees believe that this represents an appropriate level of reserves.

# **Environmental Justice Network Ireland Ltd**

## **Company Limited by Guarantee**

### **Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)***

#### **Year ended 31 December 2023**

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##### **Plans for future periods**

The two intersecting areas of activity which EJNI is engaged in relate to core operations and collaborative projects. (i) Core Operations are undertaken by the EJNI staff (all of whom are part-time) which comprise a Director (Dr Ciara Brennan), a Research and Policy Coordinator (Caitlin McIlhennon), Research Assistant (Shea Anderson) and an IT Coordinator (Phillip Lock). (ii) Collaborative Projects are run by a semi-autonomous team of paid individuals (where required) and volunteers from the EJNI network and partner organisations, nested within the larger EJNI circles of accountability (the Steering Group and Board). Approval of projects is the responsibility of the Steering Group and the Director will provide oversight and coordination of the collaborative projects within EJNI's broader strategy. Some projects require external funding (e.g. to fund buy-out/secondment for project leads, research assistance, dissemination, project-specific events etc.) and securing this funding is the responsibility of the project team who will be supported by EJNI staff. Other projects do not require funding and are cooperative efforts between individuals working for a range of partner organisations on a project of common strategic interest. This model ensures buy in and/or in-kind support from a wide range of organisations at the cutting edge of environmental justice issues. The priorities for this year are to complete and develop the projects which have commenced and to acquire funding to support the development of those projects which are at an early stage of development or which we have not yet acquired funding for - notably the Rights of Nature project and continued funding for Linking the Irish Environment. A further priority is to ensure funding is acquired for an administrative assistant given the rapid increase in organisational activities and income and the associated increased administrative burden associated with this growth.

##### **Small company provisions**

This report has been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies entitled to the small companies exemption.

The trustees' annual report was approved on 2 September 2024 and signed on behalf of the board of trustees by:



Mr S Wood  
Trustee