



NORTHERN IRELAND TOURIST BOARD
trading as
TOURISM NI

ANNUAL REPORT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

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SECTION 1 – PERFORMANCE REPORT

Purpose of Overview

The purpose of the Overview is to give the reader sufficient information to understand Tourism NI, its purpose, the key risks to the achievement of its objectives and how it has performed during the year.

Chairman's Introduction

Ellvena Graham OBE, Chairman

As Chairman of Tourism NI, I am pleased to introduce the Annual Report and Accounts for the Financial Year 2023-24.

Looking back over the past year, the 25th anniversary of the Belfast Agreement in April presented an opportunity to reflect on the remarkable journey that Northern Ireland has been on since 1998. One of the many positive outcomes of the Agreement was the dramatic growth of our tourism industry over this period.

Northern Ireland has now firmly established itself as a globally recognised, must-see destination. Having reached the milestone of £1bn visitor spend in 2019, in 2023 tourism is now a £1.2bn industry. Revenue from overnight visitors from the Republic of Ireland market alone has grown nearly tenfold, from £28m in 1998 to £268m in 2023.

I was pleased to have an early engagement with our new Minister for the Economy, Conor Murphy MLA, following the Assembly's return in February 2024. It was most encouraging to hear his recognition of tourism's importance to the Northern Ireland economy. The Minister has identified specific priorities for tourism that underline the contribution that it will make towards delivery of his Economic Vision. This recognition is also acknowledgment of the leadership role that Tourism NI provides to the sector.

Tourism NI continues to stimulate demand across the island of Ireland. Our Embrace a Giant Spirit brand has been central in supporting businesses across Northern Ireland to provide authentic visitor experiences, vibrant culture and heritage, excellent food and drink and most of all, a warm welcome. While the local tourism industry surpassed itself in recovering from the pandemic, this was swiftly followed by new challenges of rising operating costs and staffing issues.

Building on 2022's positive performance in the Republic of Ireland market, our marketing campaigns and other promotional activity saw over 1.3 million visitors coming from the Republic to Northern Ireland in 2023. These visitors stayed for 3 million nights spending a record £268 million, demonstrating a 48% increase on the previous year. Importantly, these figures demonstrate a significant increase in Northern Ireland's share of the all-island staycation market. Northern Ireland accounted for 8.4% of all Republic of Ireland trips on the Island of Ireland, up from 6.3% in 2022, and spend for the same period rose from 6.8% to 9%.

With the return of the European and other overseas markets, I anticipate that we will also see a solid return of the North American market, once the 2023 tourism performance figures are published.

Innovation was at the heart of tourism's growth in recent years, helping to drive better use of our tourism assets and increase the sector's overall productivity. Our Innovate Tourism Programme, in partnership with Innovate NI, saw 26 businesses receiving formal recognition for their activity this year. This work will continue, to support businesses in developing new product, creating efficiencies, and boosting productivity in an increasingly competitive marketplace.

Another important factor in tourism's success is a skilled and well-motivated workforce with access to training and opportunities for advancement. Tourism NI has developed demand-led toolkits and training resources to support the sector's needs. We also launched the 'MyTourismNI' e-learning platform to provide businesses with access to 'always on' learning. The 'Make It Here' campaign continues to encourage people to consider a career in the tourism and hospitality industry. Critically, it has improved perceptions of careers in tourism.

As part of an island destination, it is important that Tourism NI demonstrates leadership in sustainable tourism practices, encouraging visitors to stay longer when they are here, thereby generating increased economic benefit. We made significant advances in this area over the past year and will ensure that sustainability is at the core of our activities, so that we contribute to achieving net zero. Building on the investment of previous years, we worked with the industry to develop Visitor Experience Development Plans for Culture and Heritage, Food & Drink, and Outdoor Activity Tourism. This strategic approach to the visitor experience will deliver further economic returns for businesses and communities across Northern Ireland.

It is important that we strive to futureproof the tourism industry. Tourism NI continues to work closely with local authorities on the tourism projects within the City and Growth Deal Programmes. We expect to see these coming to fruition over the next three to four years. Preparations are also ongoing for the return of the Open Championship in 2025 after a very successful Irish Open event delivered in September 2024.

The absence of an Assembly in 2023 posed a challenge for Tourism NI, as no Minister was in post to appoint new Board Members. I am pleased to say that we do now have a Board in place with new Members bringing a wealth of knowledge and experience. As part of our schedule of meetings we have taken trips to well-established visitor experiences and to newer ones such as Glenshane Farm, the Walled City Brewery and Neary Nogs Chocolate. These visits have helped to deepen Members' understanding of the industry and I look forward to working with my fellow Board colleagues over the coming year.

I would like to thank the eight Board Members whose terms ended in the course of 2023. They have supported the Northern Ireland tourism sector during some very challenging times and their expertise has been of immense value.

I would also like to thank our Chief Executive, John McGrillen, and the staff in our Belfast and Dublin offices, whose energy and commitment contribute to both the success of the local tourism industry and Tourism NI as an organisation.

Ellvena Graham OBE
Chairman
Tourism NI

Chief Executive's Message

John McGrillen, CEO

As Chief Executive of Tourism NI, I am pleased to present our Annual Report and Accounts for the Financial Year ending 31 March 2024. The Annual Report provides a summary of the work that we have undertaken over the past year which has been aimed at stimulating consumer demand and supporting the growth of the tourism industry.

I am delighted to see the return of the Northern Ireland Executive and Conor Murphy's appointment as Minister for the Economy. The Minister's vision for the economy is focused on four objectives which are about increasing the numbers of people in Good Jobs, promoting Balanced Regional Growth, Raising Productivity and Reducing Carbon Emissions. As a sector, I feel that we are particularly well placed to deliver on that Vision, and I look forward to engaging with the Minister in the fulfilment of his tourism priorities.

Over the course of the year the Department developed a draft Tourism Strategy that was put out to public consultation in the autumn with Tourism NI facilitating an industry consultation exercise on DfE's behalf. The priorities of the Minister's Economic Vision will recentre this work in the delivery of a Strategic Vision and Action Plan that will be agreed by a Tourism Partnership Board. I look forward to leading on Tourism NI's contribution to this over the coming months and in turn developing our three-year Corporate Plan.

The tourism industry has been faced with a set of challenges arising from global political instability, steep inflation and a global shortage of labour. Together these have resulted in a steep rise in operating costs impacting on profit margins and the short-term viability of many tourism providers. This year Tourism NI's focus has been on maximising revenues from the domestic, ROI and in collaboration with Tourism Ireland, the international markets, through supporting the industry in responding to the needs and expectations of their customers and addressing the challenges arising from the "cost of doing business crisis". We have developed programmes and initiatives that assist businesses in becoming more competitive through innovation, making the sector more inclusive and adopting sustainable tourism practices.

Much of what we do is to support the industry to become more economically sustainable but increasingly our focus must be on helping industry to become more environmentally and socially sustainable. It's our landscape, built heritage and our culture which brings visitors here in the first place. This year we have been working on the development of an All-Island Sustainable Tourism Assurance Scheme in partnership with Tourism Ireland and Fáilte Ireland to recognise tourism businesses with certified sustainability commitments and/or credentials. A decision on a suitable launch date will be made in due course. Fifteen tourism experience businesses undertook a 12-week Destination Sustainability Pilot Programme to support the creation of a meaningful sustainability action plan and a deeper understanding of sustainable tourism practices to enhance Northern Ireland as an attractive tourism destination. The group met with members of the Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark's Sustainable Business Networks including Erne Water Taxis and Marble Arch Caves to gain insights into sustainable improvements they have already implemented.

As an organisation, Tourism NI is committed to operating sustainably. We have undertaken a baseline assessment of our carbon footprint and are putting in place a carbon reduction plan to reduce our environmental impact.

Our Tourism Enterprise Development (TED) Programme delivered a full calendar of hybrid industry events including the popular 'Lunch and Learn' webinar series, that introduced new topics of Climate Change and Biodiversity to add to the suite of supports on energy, water and waste measurement and monitoring.

Collaboration and partnership working is critical to the work that we do. We continued to work closely with councils to develop business cases for the Tourism Led Regeneration Projects within the City and Growth Deal Programmes. We have also been working with the councils in our collaboration with Tourism Ireland and Fáilte Ireland on the Shared Island Programme to develop synergies between the Causeway Coastal Route and Wild Atlantic Way.

In October, the annual One Young World Summit was held in Belfast. This much anticipated event gave us the opportunity to welcome more than 2,200 delegates, engaging 150 volunteers, and attracting coverage from global media outlets from over 190 countries. Tourism NI and partners delivered a range of activity to maximise on the opportunity to showcase Belfast and Northern Ireland to influential young leaders from around the world.

We continue to engage with key partners in delivering a successful Irish Open event at Royal County Down in September 2024 and preparing for The Open Championship at Royal Portrush in 2025. This year has seen the ISPS Handa World Invitational successfully hosted and delivered in Galgorm Castle and Castlerock Golf clubs in August 2023. The tournament again gave us the opportunity to be seen by a global TV audience reaffirming Northern Ireland's attraction as a world class golf destination.

In October we were delighted to hear UEFA announce that the UK and Ireland bid to host the Euros in 2028 was successful. Whilst 2028 seems some time away, significant work is underway to provide technical support to DfE as the NI government lead to the project.

In response to industry feedback on how we could best support the development of staff in the industry we have developed the 'MyTourismNI' e-learning platform. This provides always-on learning specific to the needs of the tourism sector, with content that has been developed by the industry for the industry, which is complementary to the sector specific training available from the FE Colleges and elsewhere. The platform covers business critical areas such as sales and marketing, operational effectiveness, sustainability and very importantly support on staff recruitment, development and retention.

In terms of Business 2 Business (B2B) activity, another full year of events and activities has taken place including ongoing work on delivery of the Business Events Strategy. Tourism NI worked closely with Tourism Ireland and Visit Belfast to deliver the UK Inbound Convention which took place in Belfast in September. This was their largest ever convention with approximately 340 buyers and operators in attendance. Tourism NI have developed a strategic partnership with the association so the event was a very positive start to this important relationship and longer-term activities with UK Inbound will now take place. November saw the Incoming Tour Operators Association hold their Annual Northern Ireland Workshop in the Armagh City Hotel. Tourism NI worked closely with Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Council to ensure the very best of the region's tourism and hospitality offer was showcased to Ireland's leading tour operators.

With the departure of five of our Board members, whose terms ended at the end of the last financial year, DfE undertook a Board recruitment exercise. With approval from the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, we welcomed five new Board members to their first Tourism NI Board meeting in August. Three further members' terms came to an end on 31 May 2023, and I would like to thank them for their support, commitment and enthusiasm over the past three years. December saw our first full Board meeting convened as we welcomed a further three new members. Our newly

appointed Board, along with our Chair, Ellvena Graham, bring a wealth of industry and professional expertise, that will guide and support us, and we look forward to working with them in the coming years.

As an organisation we have now embedded our new hybrid working policy. I would like to thank the Tourism NI team for their continued flexibility, hard work and commitment in meeting our objectives this year.

Looking to 2024-25, it is encouraging that economic pressures are lessening through reducing inflation and a levelling off of interest rates. Consumers are prioritising holidays and travel, and this has been evidenced by strong levels of forward bookings with tour operators, visitor attractions and accommodation providers for the coming months. While cost of living strains are still impacting on UK and ROI consumer confidence, levels are considerably higher than this time last year. The more positive economic outlook should help boost real income, and the desire to travel remains strong for our close to home and other overseas markets, albeit with a slight softening of the domestic market. Value for money and positive visitor experience will remain important drivers for the coming year.

With the support of our newly appointed Board and committed staff, we look forward to another year working with our stakeholders and partners to promote Northern Ireland as a must-see tourism destination and ensure it remains competitive and continues to meet the expectations of our visitors.

John McGrillen
Chief Executive
Tourism NI

Statutory Background & Business Activities

Tourism NI is a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) sponsored by the Department for the Economy (DfE). The organisation was originally set up as the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) in 1948 and operates under the Tourism (Northern Ireland) Order 1992. It was rebranded Tourism NI in January 2015.

Tourism NI's principal functions are to encourage tourism, to encourage the provision and improvement of tourist facilities and amenities and to certify tourism accommodation. We invest in relationships with our key strategic partners and stakeholders and offer funding mechanisms for capital projects to improve visitor attractions and activities with the aim of enhancing the visitor experience.

We devise marketing campaigns to promote Northern Ireland to best prospect customers and support the industry through the development of skills and capabilities. We also develop visitor information and invest in the use of digital and social media.

We work closely with a wide range of organisations in a variety of sectors, utilising the strengths and expertise of others to drive tourism forward and achieve our goals.

Tourism NI comprises four directorats :

- Corporate Services*
- Events
- Marketing;
- Strategic Development;

**In July 2023 a new Corporate Services Division was established which encompassed these business areas: Strategy & Policy, People & Organisational Development, Finance and Computer Services.*

In addition to our head office in Belfast, Tourism NI operates a Dublin office. The Marketing Division is based in both cities.

Commentary on the performance of the tourism sector and Tourism NI activities is detailed under section 'Performance Analysis'. It highlights the main trends and factors which have influenced the development of tourism in the current year and going forward.

Performance Summary

Preparation of Financial Statements

Under Article 8 of the Tourism (Northern Ireland) Order 1992, Northern Ireland Tourist Board trading as Tourism NI is required to prepare a statement of accounts for each financial year in the form directed by the Department for the Economy with the approval of the Department of Finance. The accounts are prepared on an accruals basis and show a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board trading as Tourism NI and of the net expenditure, cash flows and changes in taxpayers' equity for the financial year.

Results for the Year

The Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure notes a net expenditure for the year of £38.1 million compared to £46.3 million for the 2022-23 financial year.

Total operating expenditure was £38.5 million, which was a decrease of £8.0 million from 2022-23 (£46.5 million). This reflects the ever-changing priorities within tourism.

Related operating income was £0.37 million (2022-23: £0.47 million). This excludes revenue funding received from the Department for the Economy in respect of Tourism Ireland of £13.0 million (2022-23: £14.0 million) which was directly paid over to Tourism Ireland when received and therefore has been included in Grant in Aid.

Going Concern

The Statement of Financial Position as at 31 March 2024 shows a net liability of £2.8 million (2022-23: £5.7 million).

It is considered appropriate to adopt a going concern basis for the preparation of the financial statements as the Department for the Economy, sponsor department of Tourism NI, is supply financed. There is no reason to believe that the Department's future sponsorship and future Assembly approval will not be forthcoming to meet Tourism NI's liabilities as they fall due.

Performance Analysis

Targets and Achievements

Tourism NI sets out its annual objectives within an Operating Plan that contains targets for the various Divisions and Units of the organisation. Performance against targets is measured continuously throughout the financial year, in formal end of quarter reports reviewed by the Executive Leadership Team, by the Tourism NI Board and by our parent department, the Department for the Economy.

Operating Plan objectives for the 2023-24 financial year were encapsulated in 11 strategic priorities, as follows:

- Priority 1 – Marketing, Sales and Communications;
- Priority 2 – Product, Industry and Events Development;
- Priority 3 – Certification;
- Priority 4 – City and Growth Deals;
- Priority 5 – Research and Insights;
- Priority 6 – Major Events;
- Priority 7 – Advising & Supporting Government;
- Priority 8 – Finance and Governance;
- Priority 9 – People and Organisational Development;
- Priority 10 – IT Transformation and Information Governance; and,
- Priority 11 – Digital Transformation.

All priorities are aligned to our 2023-24 mission: ‘To support the development of an innovative, sustainable and inclusive tourism industry for all people and places in Northern Ireland which enriches its people, its economy and its guests.’

We aimed to deliver on our 11 priorities through:

- Supporting our industry to be innovative and creative;
- Promoting Northern Ireland as a must-see destination to markets which offer the greatest potential for growth;
- Supporting our tourism businesses to grow sustainably;
- Developing a tourism ecosystem that presents opportunities for all, bringing economic and community benefit to every part of Northern Ireland;
- Supporting the tourism sector to become greener and contribute to the sustainable development of our built and natural environment.
- Supporting the development of authentic tourism experiences which bring our unique heritage to life in an invigorating, responsible and sustainable way;
- Looking after our people;
- Transforming the way we work.

Tourism NI’s Corporate Risk Register is aligned to the objectives in the Corporate Plan and Operating Plan to ensure that any risk or uncertainty linked to delivery is identified, managed, and effectively controlled or mitigated where possible. Corporate Risks are initially identified by the Executive Leadership Team and agreed with the Tourism NI Board. The Risk Register is formally reviewed and updated each quarter and reported to the Tourism NI Board and Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

Statement of Performance

Performance Report 2023-24

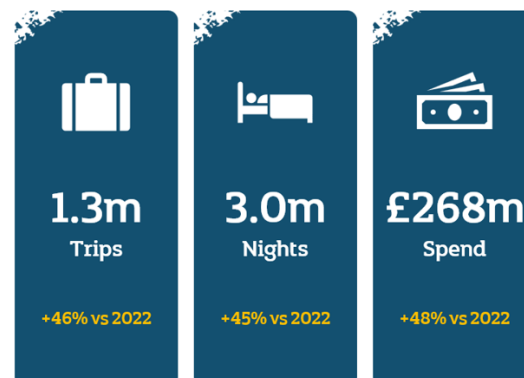
At the end of the 2023-24 financial year the Northern Ireland tourism industry clearly demonstrated that it had recovered from the pandemic, albeit a new set of economic challenges had to be faced. Most industry performance indicators suggested a better performance than in 2022 and pre pandemic. While cost of living strains were still impacting UK and ROI consumer confidence, levels were considerably higher than in the previous year.

Tourism NI, working alongside key partners, is pleased to have supported the industry through its marketing and promotional campaigns to promote the whole of Northern Ireland as a must-see tourism destination; its B2B programme to local experience and accommodation providers to grow the domestic and international markets alike; and industry programmes to develop business skills, innovation and management practice to ensure business sustainability.

Integral to our activities is our 'Embrace a Giant Spirit' brand, championing Northern Ireland as a customer centric destination with a warm welcome, authentic stories, natural landscapes, and cultural assets.

Marketing

Tourism NI ran the main Autumn and Spring marketing campaigns in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The combined campaigns generated a total of £168.5 million in directly attributable visitor spend. With the receipt of additional budget, the Autumn campaign was upweighted and a Festive campaign was also delivered. The demonstrable impact of Tourism NI's marketing campaign and supporting activities was further evidenced by the Republic of Ireland's Central Statistics Office tourism statistics:



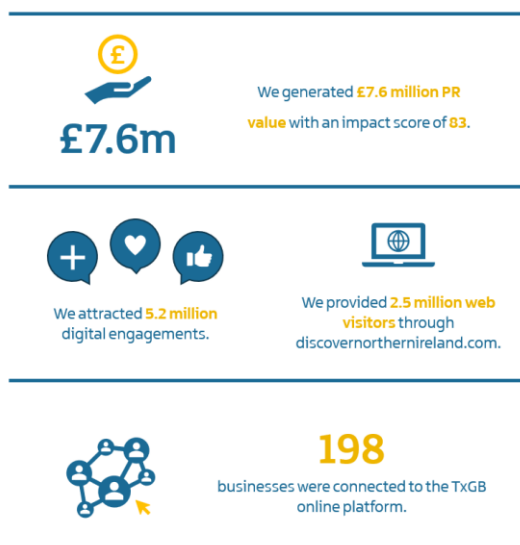
- There were more than 1.3 million overnight trips by visitors from the Republic to Northern Ireland in 2023, a rise of 46% on 2022 revised figures.
- 3 million nights were spent in Northern Ireland by those visitors, representing a 45% increase on the 2.1 million nights spent in 2022.
- The figures reveal that on average, ROI overnight visitors stayed 2.3 nights in Northern Ireland spending £204 per head, resulting in £268 million in record spend, an increase of 48% on 2022.

ROI holiday visitors to NI increased significantly in 2023 vs 2022.

NI market share of ROI trips and spend on the island of Ireland both increased in 2023.

Tourism NI's Consumer Sentiment research indicated that the majority of ROI visitors said their trip exceeded or matched expectations, with the range of places to eat and drink, the welcome and hospitality and the choice of things to see and do being particularly highly rated.

Over the course of the year:



Tourism NI, in partnership with Tourism Ireland, delivered 270 international media visits, resulting in 1,390 press articles in turn generating £30.5 million positive publicity for Northern Ireland in overseas markets.



We also worked in close collaboration with the local authority Visitor Information Network and the Fáilte Ireland Visitor Engagement branch on the development of a Visitor Information Plan for Northern Ireland.

On our own sustainability journey as an organisation, we established a means to measure, reduce and offset carbon emissions generated through our marketing campaigns.

Business Solutions

The Business Solutions team worked with Tourism Ireland and other strategic partners across a range of platforms to deliver a busy calendar of engagement opportunities for Northern Ireland industry to meet and do business with International Travel Trade and MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Events) operators and buyers.

Business Solutions collaborated with Tourism Ireland to deliver a strategic partnership which brought the UK Inbound Annual Convention to NI. The event took place in September 2023 and 350 UK Inbound members attended the Workshop, two Showcase evenings and FAMs were delivered.



Tourism NI and Ireland's Inbound Tour Operators Association (ITOA) delivered the annual ITOA workshop in Armagh in November. The event was extremely well attended with 87 Northern Ireland Industry taking part in a full day of 1-1 meetings with 35 ITOA member organisations with some 1,500 appointments taking place. 630 engagement opportunities to industry were provided across 89 international platforms. 44 familiarisation trips gave 474 international operators the opportunity to visit all parts of Northern Ireland and experience our tourism offer. ITOA are the main membership body for major tour operators in ROI. In 2023, ITOA members delivered 734,000 overseas holiday and business tourism visitors to the island of Ireland (9% to Northern Ireland), the value of which was €623 million with approximately 10% revenue spent in Northern Ireland.

In Business Tourism, Tourism NI in collaboration with Visit Belfast, Visit Derry, and key venues, welcomed 103 conferences, 45,284 delegates, generating £43.8 million worth of economic impact.



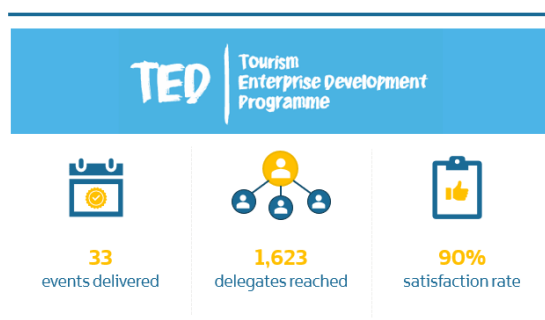
Throughout the year, the Business Solutions team supported 50 NI businesses to attend several key international MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Events) platforms.

This generated a total of 1,082 appointments worth £28.8 million.

Significant planning was carried out during the year in preparation for Tourism NI's flagship Meet the Buyer Workshop held in April 2024. Planned in partnership with Tourism Ireland, over 150 international operators were scheduled to have 5,000 meetings with 155 Northern Irish tourism businesses over the one and a half days.

Industry Development

Over the course of the year Tourism NI delivered an extensive hybrid Tourism Enterprise Development Programme. The programme delivered 33 events reaching 1,623 delegates with an overall satisfaction rate of 90%.



The popular 'Lunch and Learn' webinar series, introduced new topics of Climate Change and Biodiversity to add to the suite of supports on energy, water and waste measurement and monitoring.

Uniquely, this year saw the first series of Innovate Tourism Roadshows across the province in partnership with Innovate NI.

Tourism NI rolled out a strategic approach to Tourism Careers and Skills. 'Make It Here' careers campaign continued to encourage more people to consider a career in the tourism and hospitality industry. Over the course of the year, it generated 65k unique visitors to the dedicated site-makeyourcareer.co.uk with 45k going on to peruse vacancies on partner recruitment websites. Since October 2022, positive

perceptions of careers in Tourism among the general public have increased by 4%.

The Wellbeing Promised was launched with key stakeholders. This employer charter seeks to foster a positive workplace focusing on respect, reward and recognition. Nearly 80 businesses have committed, an important stepping stone to further work in this area. In partnership with the FHE sector, we delivered a range of accredited Skills programmes focusing on Customer Service. We were also proud to support eight Deaf Tour Guides achieve their Level 2 Tour Guiding qualification.

This year saw the launch of MyTourismNI a new digital, always on E-learning platform. To date it showcases 15 live courses with 162 total users awarded 249 badges with 46% returning users.



We have been working on the development of an All-Island Sustainable Tourism Assurance Scheme in partnership with Tourism Ireland and Fáilte Ireland to support industry in achieving long-term sustainability.

Fifteen tourism experience businesses have undertaken a 12-week Destination Sustainability Pilot Programme to support the creation of a meaningful sustainability action plan and a deeper understanding of sustainable tourism practices to enhance Northern Ireland as an attractive tourism destination.

Events



International Tourism Events Fund

- Supported 9 events
- Economic benefit of £25.6m
- Return on investment of £46:£1

The International Tourism Events Fund supported nine international events which generated a total economic benefit of £25.6 million to the local economy and achieving a return on investment of £46:£1. A programme of events specific industry support was delivered between January and March 2024. The series included two in-person masterclasses: Delivering Commercially Successful Events and Delivering Sustainable Events. In addition, the series included a Delivering a Volunteer Programme webinar and the commissioning of a brand aligned Volunteering at Events Toolkit.

The tri-sanctioned (DP World Tour, LPGA, LET) ISPS Handa World Invitational was successfully hosted and delivered in Galgorm Castle and Castlerock Golf clubs on 17-20 August 2023. The tournament provided Northern Ireland with an opportunity to demonstrate to a global audience its appeal as a world class golf destination as it was broadcast to an estimated global TV audience of 600 million from across 162 countries. The G4D Tour was also hosted as part of the wider event, bringing together 11 of the world's best golfers with disabilities.

The One Young World Summit took place from 2-5th October 2023, welcoming more than 2,200 delegates, engaging 150 volunteers, and attracting coverage from global media outlets from over 190 countries. Tourism NI and partners delivered a range of activities to maximise on the opportunity to showcase Belfast and Northern Ireland.

Tourism NI worked closely with the Department for the Economy and the Department for Communities officials across the various workstreams for the UK and Ireland successful bid to host the UEFA Euros 2028. Tourism NI continues to support the

Department for Economy as the NI Government Lead in Euro 2028 in this Transition Phase, to successfully co-ordinate the work programme and contribute both at a UK and Ireland and Northern Ireland level.

With the return of the Irish Open to Royal County Down in September 2024, the Major Events team has been working closely with DP World Tour and Newry, Mourne and Down District Council to identify activity that will maximise the tourism benefits from the event. Preparations also continued for the 153rd Open Championship which will return to Northern Ireland in 2025 after the success of the 2019 event.

Quality and Standards



The team carried out 2,097 certification inspections over the year, 976 of which were newly certified properties. The team engaged with contractors and developers throughout the year, in the early stages of accommodation planning and advising on legislative and grading requirements. Total certified accommodation stock figures in Northern Ireland grew by 6.9%. Notable new openings include Room2 Hometel and The Ebrington Hotel & Spa (graded at 4*).

The team carried out 146 accommodation quality grading assessments over the latter part of the year, 36 of which were newly awarded grades.

Experience Development

A more refined approach to Experience Development was progressed this year, focusing on our thematic areas of Outdoors & Activities, Food & Drinks and Culture &

Heritage. A dedicated Visitor Experience Development plan is in place for each area, co-designed with stakeholders and industry.

The Embracing the Outdoors tourism framework has been progressed with the launch of the delivery structures through an Interdepartmental Working Group, consisting of senior representatives from Department for Economy, Infrastructure, Communities and Environment & Rural Affairs. It will be underpinned by an Outdoor Tourism Working Group, representing 40 key stakeholders.

A Music & Literature Experience Development programme was rolled out, prioritising industry from regional areas where there is an identified gap. Similarly, an Embrace a Giant Taste programme was delivered, resulting in ten new food & drink tourism experiences. Four new distilleries were added to the NI Spirits Trail. New partnerships were established with a range of sectors including AVEA (Association of Visitor Experience Attractions), Great Lighthouses of Ireland and IAAT (Ireland's Association of Adventure Tourism).

The Embrace a Giant Spirit Portfolio was launched, representing ninety market-ready tourism experience providers who will benefit from targeted learning and development to reach their businesses potential. Nearly 300 delegates attended dedicated brand workshops across four locations.

Regions & Investment and City & Growth Deals

The Tourism NI Regions & Investment and City & Growth Deal Teams have continued to support Councils across Northern Ireland in the delivery of the Tourism Led Regeneration Projects within the various City & Growth Deal programmes. The five key projects in the pipeline are, Gobbins Phase II, Belfast Stories, Destination Royal Hillsborough, Mourne Mountains Gateway, Derry Londonderry on the North Atlantic. Investment totals approximately £229 million in tourism projects, which will compliment and extend

Northern Ireland's range of tourist attractions across the region.

We also provided tourism expertise and part input on Department for Communities led City & Growth Deal projects such as Carrickfergus Regeneration and Bushmills Regeneration.

The Regions & Investment team has been working in collaboration with Tourism Ireland and Fáilte Ireland on the Shared Island Programme to develop synergies between the Causeway Coastal Route and the Wild Atlantic Way.

The final tranche of the 2021-23 Experience Development Programme saw three visitor experiences receive capital support during the year: Friel's Famine & Folklore Experience, Maritime Mile Connectivity project and the Jungle NI Llamas Experience, Moneymore.

We completed a strategic assessment of our current tourism product and experience offer. The Product Review identified how we take advantage of interconnected challenges and opportunities, to enhance and maximise our offer and attractiveness to potential visitors. This seminal piece of work will inform new capital investment and development programmes to support new and enhanced tourism experiences.

Insights & Intelligence



2x consumer sentiment waves in NI and ROI,
1x Accessibility Survey &
1x Industry Survey.



5x Tourism 360° publications
downloaded 518 times.

The Insights and Intelligence Service is responsible for delivering a robust evidence base for Tourism NI, industry and stakeholders to help inform policy and strategy development and operational decisions.

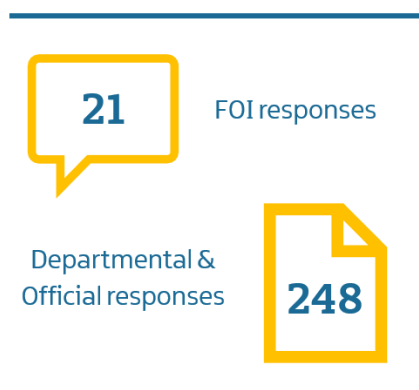
This year, the team's primary research consisted of two waves of consumer sentiment research in NI and the ROI, one NI industry barometer, one dedicated industry survey focusing on the levels of accessibility provision

within tourism businesses, and two marketing campaign evaluation surveys in NI and ROI. The team also facilitated 58 in-house surveys, including a range of post-event/post-fam feedback surveys.

There were five Tourism 360° publications published between 1st April 2023 – 31st March 2024, which were downloaded 518 times over this period. Monthly accommodation performance reports and summaries of tourism performance statistics released by the Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency and the Central Statistics Office were also published on tourismni.com.

Business Planning & Improvement

With responsibility for the co-ordination of key corporate information on behalf of Tourism NI, the Business Planning & Improvement Team processed 248 departmental and official responses and answered 21 Freedom of Information requests between April 2023 and March 2024.



Key Issues & Risks Facing the Entity

Page 37 of the Governance Statement outlines Tourism NI's approach to risk management, identifying and reporting on risks and management of risks.

Risks being managed as of 31 March 2024 were categorised as follows:

- Strategy
- People
- Security, Cyber Threat & Data Management
- Governance & Financial Management
- Reputation

Key issues identified in 2023-24, their impact and mitigating actions are summarised below:

Key Risk	Impact	Mitigating Action
Legal Authority	TNI did not have the legislative authority to deliver the Co-operative Marketing Fund.	The TNI Board is appointing a suitably qualified and experienced external consultant to review the work programme currently in place and application of the same; and to determine if TNI has the vires to deliver the support currently being provided to the tourism industry.
Full Cost Recovery	The accommodation certification and grading schemes have historically generated modest annual deficits. DoF had advised the NIAO that any ongoing deficits may be classed as irregular until full cost recovery can be achieved.	TNI will be seeking ministerial approval to operate at a reduced deficit given the level of increase that would be required to achieve full cost recovery.
Delegated Limits	Tourism NI identified three business cases which breached the delegated limit for capital expenditure for which DfE approval was not obtained.	All business cases were submitted to DfE for retrospective approval on 23/04/2024. Tourism NI will ensure all staff are aware of the delegated limits in place to secure DfE approval in a timely manner, when required.

Introduction of An Electronic Travel Authorisation For Visitors to the UK

The Nationality and Borders Bill was introduced in the House of Commons on 6 July 2021. Within the Bill there are plans for the introduction of an Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) for all non-visa national visitors to the UK. For these visitors coming to Northern Ireland this will apply whether they arrive direct at a UK port of entry (Airport/Ferry Terminal) or via the land border with the ROI. This would be similar to the ESTA which is currently required to travel to the USA.

It will be obtained through an online application costing £10 per traveller, irrespective of age. Home Office guidance states that the majority of application decisions will be made within 3 days. The ETA will be valid for two years and will be a legal requirement however there will not be a formal checking process on the RoI/ NI border. An exemption from the ETA requirement has been granted for non-visa nationals legally resident in Ireland when travelling to the UK on a journey from within the Common Travel Area.

The ETA has been piloted with Gulf states since the end of 2023. The Home Office has also stated that it recognises the importance of the timing of the introduction within core tourism markets and is planning to hold off on the introduction in those countries until late 2024 or early 2025.

The majority of overseas visitors travelling to Northern Ireland do so as part of a visit to the island of Ireland and over 60% of international visitors arrive via the Republic of Ireland. The requirement to have an ETA could be a deterrent to both those seeking to book a trip to NI from overseas as part of a longer visit to the Island and a deterrent to agents selling itineraries which include Northern Ireland as it will be easier to simply sell a trip which covers the Republic of Ireland only.

Tourism NI has engaged with the Home Office together with colleagues from DfE, Tourism Ireland and NITA on the introduction of the ETA, specifically on the development of an effective Communications Plan. The UK Government has made it clear they do not intend to have an inspection / enforcement regime in Northern Ireland. Awareness of the requirement for an ETA in order to travel to Northern Ireland legally will be crucial as its introduction does potentially present another barrier to overcome in encouraging the inclusion of Northern Ireland within itineraries in the future and also for spontaneous day trips to Northern Ireland for international visitors who are holidaying in ROI.

Department for the Economy Minister Conor Murphy, appointed in February 2024, has identified the introduction of the ETA as a priority area of concern and is raising this matter with the Home Office.

Information Including Social Matters, Anti-corruption and Anti-bribery Matters

Rural Needs

The Rural Needs (NI) Act 2016 introduced a new statutory duty on Northern Ireland departments, district councils and other specified public bodies to have due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans and when designing and delivering public services. The Act became operational for Government Departments and district councils from 1 June 2017 and covers two main duties.

The first is a duty to have due regard to rural needs (referred to as the 'due regard duty') and the second relates to monitoring and reporting on how the due regard duty has been exercised. The latter duty requires that public authorities publish this information in their annual reports and provide a copy of this information to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) on an annual basis. Tourism NI has due regard to rural needs when undertaking new or revised policies/ activities by subjecting them to rural needs impact assessments, in accordance with guidance issued by DAERA.

Anti-corruption and Anti-bribery

Tourism NI adheres to and promotes good practice guidance on anti-corruption and anti-bribery matters through a range of measures including anti-fraud and raising concerns arrangements.

Tourism NI takes a zero-tolerance approach to Fraud. The Tourism NI Fraud and Whistle-blowing (also known as Raising Concerns) policies were approved by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee in August 2022. These detail the policy and associated Response Plans, including the responsibilities and procedures for Tourism NI staff. These documents are available to the public on Tourism NI's website and internally for staff on a dedicated section of the intranet. Each reported case is assessed, referred to another authority if appropriate, thoroughly investigated, reported to the police if required and all necessary action is taken. All cases, progress and outcomes are reported quarterly to the Tourism NI Audit & Risk Assurance Committee, as well as the Department for Economy's Fraud and Raising Concerns Branch.

At 1 April 2023, there were no open Fraud or Raising Concerns cases, brought forward from previous years. During 2023-24, there were no fraud or raising concerns allegations reported.

Tourism NI's policies and procedures for Fraud and Raising Concerns were reviewed in Q4 2024-25 and updated to reflect current best practice, including the appointment of a Speak-Up Champion and a dedicated Fraud and Raising Concerns Officer. The updated policies are due to be approved and rolled out early 2025-26. All staff are required to complete annual mandatory Fraud training through the NI Centre for Applied learning (CAL).

Tourism NI's Gifts and Hospitality guidance is also a key control in place to mitigate against corruption and bribery. This guidance outlines the types of instances in which it is, and is not, appropriate for staff to accept or offer gifts and hospitality as part of their official duties. Registers of gifts and hospitality are monitored and published on an annual basis on Tourism NI's website.

Sustainability Report

The importance of sustainability in all its forms to the tourism sector was reflected in the draft Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland published by the Department for the Economy in November 2023. The Vision for the Strategy is to: *“Establish Northern Ireland as a year-round world class destination which is renowned for its authentic experiences, landscape, heritage and culture and which benefits communities, the economy and the environment, with sustainability at its core”*. Tourism NI worked closely with Departmental officials and stakeholders on the development of the draft strategy and will play a key role in shaping the action plan which will set out how this vision will be achieved in the coming years.

At the same time, Tourism NI extended its portfolio of supports to equip tourism businesses to become more sustainable. This work encompassed the Leaner and Greener series, a new Destination Sustainability Programme, and a dedicated Sustainability micro-site on www.tourismni.com, the main online interface with the tourism industry. Sustainability is also increasingly embedded in Tourism NI’s work on the development of new and enhanced experiences for visitors, particularly plans for outdoor adventure, activity and nature tourism across NI.

Tourism NI, in partnership with Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland, also started work this year on a new all-island sustainable tourism assurance programme. The programme seeks to accelerate action on sustainability across the tourism sector whilst providing clarity to visitors of the sustainability credentials of individual businesses. It is intended to be based on an umbrella model which adds value to the offerings of existing certification organisations via a national marque of recognition.

Within Tourism NI, an independent baseline assessment of the organisation’s carbon footprint was completed at the start of 2024, along with a set of potential pathways for the organisation to move towards net zero emissions in line with the Climate Change (Northern Ireland) Act 2022. The next step is for the Board and the Executive Leadership Team to agree and implement a plan focused on those actions and changes in behaviours within the organisation’s control. In parallel, Tourism NI will continue to engage with Departmental officials and other agencies to ensure it provides leadership to the industry in this area and meets any emerging requirements for climate change reporting by public bodies.

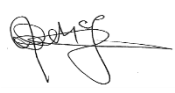
Internal Engagement

During 2023-24 Tourism NI continued to operate a hybrid approach to internal engagement; offering wellness programmes and training opportunities online and continuing with in-person engagements for inductions, all staff briefings, bi-weekly Executive Leadership Team meetings and monthly Corporate Management Team meetings.

External Engagement

Tourism NI hosted five university placement students in various units throughout the organisation in 2023-24, imparting valuable knowledge, experience and career skills in the process, with the aim of helping to build the leaders of tomorrow.

Signed

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John McGrillen', written over a horizontal line.

John McGrillen

Accounting Officer

Date: 15 April 2025

SECTION 2 – ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT

Corporate Governance Report

The purpose of this report is to explain the composition and organisation of Tourism NI's governance structures and how they support the achievement of its objectives.

Directors' Report

The Directors present their report and financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2024.

Results

The net expenditure after interest for the year is £38.1 million (2022-23: £46.3 million).

Directors

The Directors are the Board Members as listed below. The Executive Leadership Team is listed in the Remuneration and Staff Report. For the year ended 31 March 2024, John McGrillen was the Chief Executive Officer. The Board Members who served during the year up to 31 March 2024 are as follows:

Ellvena Graham OBE- Chairman Appointed 30 June 2022

Ellvena has extensive business experience, having worked across a number of different sectors including Energy, Banking, Agri-Food, Business Tourism, Higher Education & Sport. Ellvena is Chairman of Catalyst Inc, also a Non-Executive Director in Dale Farm Ltd and is the Senior Independent Governor of Queen's University Belfast. Amongst a range of other roles, she has been Chairman of the Electricity Supply Board (ESB), one of the major state-owned utilities in Ireland and a Non-Executive Director of Ulster Bank Ltd. She has been Chairman of Belfast Waterfront & Ulster Hall since the new conference centre was established in 2016 and has played an active role in driving business tourism into Northern Ireland. Ellvena was President of NI Chamber of Commerce & Industry for two terms and is a past Chair of the Economic Advisory Group. Ellvena has over 30 years' experience in Banking, most recently at Executive Management level as Head of Ulster Bank in Northern Ireland, ending in 2015.

Ellvena is a Fellow of the Institute of Directors, a Fellow of the Institute of Banking and a Chartered Bank Director. She was awarded an OBE in the 2018 New Year's Honours list, for contribution to the economy and advancement of women in Business. She received the IOD NI Non-Executive Director of the Year award in 2021.

Aileen Martin
Appointed 8 August 2023

Aileen Martin is a Director of Northern Ireland's largest independent hotel group, Hastings Hotels. The company was founded by her father, the late Sir William Hastings in 1966 and she joined as Sales Executive in 1993. Over the last 30 years Aileen has also held the position of Sales Director and Commercial Director and in this time, she has played a key role in the strategic direction and growth of the group which has six properties across the province including the five-star Culloden Estate & Spa and Grand Central Hotel.

Aileen is Chair of John Atcheson Trust and Rosie's Trust and President of Northern Ireland Polio Fellowship. In November 2023 she became a Non-Executive Director of Action Cancer.

Áine Gallagher
Appointed 8 August 2023

Áine is a Fellow of Chartered Accountants Ireland, having trained with PricewaterhouseCoopers in Belfast. She is a former Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and Non-Executive Member of the Advisory Group of the Northern Ireland Audit Office and was Director of Operations for Culture Company 2013 Ltd, the company established by the then Derry City Council to develop and deliver the inaugural UK City of Culture in 2013. She was Director of Finance and Corporate Services for Northern Ireland Hospice and worked for Invest NI for two separate terms, most recently in 2021-22.

Since 2018, Áine has provided consultancy services to clients in the public, private and voluntary sectors on strategic planning, governance, organisational effectiveness, funding and finance, management reporting, capital and development projects, and growth, improvement and cultural programmes.

Ciaran O'Neill
Appointed 8 August 2023

With a career spanning over 35 years in the hospitality sector, Ciaran O'Neill is a graduate of the Northern Ireland Catering College, Portrush. Currently, he is Managing Director at the Bishop's Gate Hotel Derry, an award-winning establishment opened in 2016.

Beyond his professional achievements, Ciaran has made lasting contributions to the industry landscape. A decade of service on the Board of Visit Derry reflects his dedication to promoting tourism and its growth. His 14-year tenure on the Board of the Northern Ireland Hotels Federation culminated in his role as President in 2016.

Ciaran's dedication extends to nurturing future talent in the tourism sector through his role as Chair of the Hospitality and Tourism Skills Network (HATs) and his commitment to education as Chairperson of the Board of Governors at St Cecilia's College.

Colin Johnston
Appointed 8 August 2023

Colin has more than 25 years of experience in the hospitality industry. Joining Galgorm Collection in 2001, he held several senior management roles before taking the helm as Managing Director in 2016. During this time Colin managed the integration and £60 million development phase at Galgorm as well as spearheading the development of the £10 million renovations of The Rabbit Hotel & Retreat. More recently he has been involved in the acquisition and development of The Old Inn, Crawfordsburn. Colin was instrumental in setting up Galgorm's Spa Scholarship in 2018 and was a founding member of the Northern Ireland Hospitality School which launched in 2021.

John Hood
Appointed 27 November 2023

John Hood has over 23 years' in-depth experience in investment, marketing and economic development. For the last ten years he was the Director of the Food, Drink & Tourism Division at Invest NI where he delivered a number of key tourism accommodation and development projects in Northern Ireland, as well as delivering significant growth across the food and drink sector. In October 2023 he was appointed as a Non-Executive Director to the Board of the Livestock & Meat Commission for Northern Ireland.

Karly Greene
Appointed 27 November 2023

Karly Greene is Deputy Director and Head of Northern Ireland at the Department of Business and Trade since July 2024 supporting Northern Ireland businesses to boost exports, grow internationally and supporting inward investment to drive economic growth. Prior to that, Karly was the Director of Strategic Development and Partnerships at the Arts Council of Northern Ireland from November 2020, responsible for developing the Arts Council's strategic corporate and business plans and for research, policy and advocacy.

Karly has fifteen years experience across the public, private and voluntary sectors in using research and data to inform strategy, policy and executive decision making, having previously worked as Head of Research & Equality Services in the NI Housing Executive and Research Director with Quadrangle. Karly is passionate about using evidence to implement change and demonstrate impact with a focus on equality, social justice and involving customers and underrepresented people in the strategy design process. She is also a trustee on the board of Housing Rights and former chairperson of Nexus NI.

Linda MacHugh
Appointed 8 August 2023

Linda recently retired after 18 years as a senior civil servant, during which she held a number of positions including Director of Urban Regeneration Policy, Principal Private Secretary to the First Minister, Director of Water and Drainage Policy, and Director of Corporate Support Services in the Department for Infrastructure (DfI). She also led the Local Government Reform Programme and was Acting Deputy Secretary in DfI.

Prior to joining the Civil Service, Linda worked to support the textiles and clothing sector as Director of the NI Textiles & Apparel Association and the Irish Linen Guild. She also spent eleven years as a Trustee of the Meningitis Research Foundation.

Michael Counahan
Appointed 27 November 2023

Michael Counahan is managing director of CHL Consulting Co. and has more than 38 years' professional experience in tourism, cultural heritage and the arts. During this time, he has worked on tourism development projects throughout Europe, the Caribbean, Middle East and South-East Asia.

His consultancy work includes strategic planning for public and private sector organisations, economic planning, project analysis and management, and business planning. Particular areas of activity in recent years include tourism destination planning, visitor attraction development and operations, and land/building asset utilisation.

He has worked on many tourism development projects in Northern Ireland including acting as project leader on the development of Titanic Belfast. He co-founded AVEA, the Association of Visitor Experiences & Attractions, which now has a membership of 103 leading attractions, and Michael is company secretary. He is also a director of Pipeworks Music, formerly the Dublin International Organ & Choral Festival.

Patricia Corbett
Appointed May 2020, term ended 31 May 2023

Patricia's most recent full-time role was as the first Head of Hillsborough Castle for Historic Royal Palaces (HRP). She led the £20 million programme to open the Castle and Gardens to the public transforming it into a leading visitor attraction. Her role was diverse, including the development of the commercial operating model for the Castle; significant stakeholder engagement; and leading the employment and training of over 100 staff to support visitor services, host events and community engagement. She also negotiated the transfer of the Courthouse and Fort to HRP thereby safeguarding the future of these historic buildings. As a Deputy Lieutenant for the Borough of Belfast her role is to support Royal and civic lieutenancy activity, including encouraging voluntary and charitable organisations and supporting local businesses. Patricia is also a member of the Board of The Grand Opera House Belfast.

John West**Appointed May 2020, term ended 31 May 2023**

John is recently retired from a career in the financial services industry in Ireland and the UK where he held a variety of senior executive roles specialising in areas such as operations, risk management and customer service. He brings public sector boardroom experience, having served as Senior Independent Board Member and Audit Committee Chair with three separate NI Government Departments, including currently with the Department for Communities. He also sits as an Independent Board Member on the Court Funds Judicial Liaison Group. John is originally from Enniskillen, now lives in Holywood and enjoys holidaying with his wife Debbie on the beautiful North Antrim coast.

Anya O'Connor**Appointed May 2020, term ended 31 May 2023**

Anya is Senior International Officer at Queen's University Belfast. Her role is focused on driving student recruitment from the Americas as well as building profile and partnerships for the University in the region. In addition, Anya acts as a career development coach within the Queen's internal coaching team, supporting staff from across the University. Anya is a graduate of the Washington Ireland Program (2010) and was also Assistant Director for the Program in 2017. She is committed to supporting initiatives that develop positive international relations for Northern Ireland and in 2018 was part of the team that brought the World Economic Forum's 'Shape Europe' conference to Belfast. In 2018 she was admitted to the British American Project as a fellow. Anya holds an MA in English Literature and Politics from the University of Glasgow.

Register of Interests

The Chairman, Board Members and Senior Management Team (from July 2023, the Executive Leadership Team) are required to register all interests, direct or indirect, which members of the public might reasonably think could influence their judgement. The register of interests is available for public inspection by contacting the Executive Support Team, Tourism NI, Linum Chambers, Floors 10-12, Bedford Square, Bedford Street, Belfast, BT2 7ES.

Prompt Payment Policy

Tourism NI is committed to the prompt payment of bills for goods and services received in accordance with the Government's Better Payments Practice Payment Code.

Unless otherwise stated in the contract, payment is due within 30 days of the receipt of the goods, or services, or presentation of a valid invoice or similar demand, whichever is later. Regular reviews conducted to measure how promptly Tourism NI paid its bills found that 99.5% (2022-23: 99.1%) of bills were paid within this standard.

In December 2008 the Government and Institute of Credit Management launched the new Prompt Payment Code setting a target of paying invoices within 10 days. Under this initiative Tourism NI achieved 99.5% of bills paid within 10 days (2022-23: 99.1%).

Personal Data Related Incidents

There were 2 minor Personal Data Related Incidents relating to misdirected emails to report in 2023-24 (2022-23: none).

Complaints Handling

Tourism NI aims to provide a professional, high-quality service to our customers and stakeholders and we welcome any feedback which will help us to improve our service. Our complaints and feedback procedures are broken down into two key areas: feedback about tourist accommodation premises or other tourist amenities, including visitor attractions, or complaints specifically about Tourism NI services (Corporate Complaints).

In the case of Corporate Complaints, we will acknowledge complaints within three working days and endeavour to provide a response within ten working days. If it is not possible to provide a full response within 10 working days, we will advise of the progress of our investigation and provide an indication of the likely response date.

If complainants are dissatisfied with our response, they can refer the matter to the Chief Executive within 28 days of the date of the initial response, and if they still consider that Tourism NI has not dealt with the matter either properly or fairly, they can refer their complaint to the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO).

One complaint was made about the services provided by Tourism NI in 2023-24 (2022-23: none).

Further information on the handling and monitoring of complaints is available on the Tourism NI 'Feedback and Complaints' webpage at <https://tourismni.com/feedback-and-complaints/> or by contacting complaints.feedback@tourismni.com.

Charitable and Political Donations

No charitable or political donations have been made by Tourism NI in 2023-24 (2022-23: £Nil).

Auditor

The Comptroller and Auditor General is the external auditor for Tourism NI. There were no payments made in relation to the National Fraud Initiative during 2023-24 (2022-23: £1,319) to the Northern Ireland Audit Office in respect of non-audit work.

Statement of the Board and Accounting Officer's Responsibilities

Under Article 8 of the Tourism (Northern Ireland) Order 1992, the Department for the Economy (with approval from the Department of Finance) has directed Tourism NI to prepare for each financial year a statement of accounts in the form and on the basis set out in the Accounts Direction.

The accounts are prepared on an accruals basis and show a true and fair view of the state of affairs of Tourism NI and of its income and expenditure, Statement of Financial Position and cash flows for the financial year.

In preparing the accounts, the Accounting Officer is required to comply with the requirements of the Government Financial Reporting Manual (FReM) and in particular to:

- Observe the Accounts Direction issued by the Department for the Economy, including the relevant accounting and disclosure requirements, and apply suitable accounting policies on a consistent basis;
- Make judgements and estimates on a reasonable basis;
- State whether applicable accounting standards as set out in the Government Financial Reporting Manual have been followed, and disclose and explain any material departures in the financial statements;
- Prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis; and
- Confirm that the annual report and accounts as a whole is fair, balanced and understandable and the annual report, accounts and the judgements required for determining that it is fair, balanced and understandable.

The Accounting Officer of the Department for the Economy has designated the Chief Executive as Accounting Officer of Tourism NI. As Accounting Officer, the Chief Executive has responsibility for the propriety and regularity of the public finances for which he is answerable, for the keeping of proper records and for safeguarding Tourism NI's assets, as set out in Managing Public Money Northern Ireland, issued by the Department of Finance.

As the Accounting Officer, I have taken all the steps that I ought to have taken to make myself aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that Tourism NI's auditors are aware of that information. So far as I am aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the auditors are unaware.

Governance Statement

Introduction

This Governance Statement is intended to give a clear understanding of the dynamics and control structure of Tourism NI by reflecting the organisation's governance, risk management and internal control arrangements during 2023-24 and up to the date of approval of this Annual Report and Accounts.

Corporate Governance refers to the system by which the organisation is directed and controlled. The effectiveness of direction and control of an organisation can be linked to:

- **Governance:** how well an organisation plans, sets, communicates and monitors progress against its corporate objectives;
- **Risk Management:** how the organisation identifies, considers and manages the risks to the achievement of its objectives; and
- **Business Controls:** how the organisation's Board and Executive Leadership Team assures themselves and their stakeholders that they are in control of the business and the associated risks.

As Accounting Officer, I am personally responsible for the overall accountability arrangements of the organisation which include: maintaining a sound system of corporate governance; an effective system of Internal Controls; assessing the organisational capacity to handle and manage risk; and maintaining propriety and regularity of public finances, in accordance with the responsibilities assigned to me in Managing Public Money Northern Ireland (MPMNI).

I am also responsible for ensuring compliance with the requirements of Tourism NI's Partnership Agreement (previously known as the Management Statement and Financial Memorandum (MSFM) agreed between Tourism NI and the Department for the Economy (DfE) and ensuring compliance with other Government directives and guidance on good practice in corporate governance.

Compliance with Corporate Governance Code

As a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) of DfE, Tourism NI has been expected to adopt the practices set out in HM Treasury's "Corporate Governance In Central Government Departments: Code of Good Practice (NI) 2013" (the Code). Tourism NI has complied with the principles of good practice in the Code.

In compliance with the Code, Tourism NI has established and maintained key organisational structures which support the delivery of corporate governance.

Governance Framework

The key organisational structures which support the delivery of corporate governance are the:

- Tourism NI Board;
- Audit and Risk Assurance Committee;
- Finance and Casework Committee;
- Marketing Committee; and
- Executive Leadership Team.

From July 2023, Tourism NI introduced a new management structure to include an Executive Leadership Team (ELT) which is composed of the Chief Executive plus the senior representative of each Division. The Senior Management Team remains in place and includes all Heads of Departments and supports ELT as and when required.

Tourism NI Board

The Northern Ireland Tourist Board trading as Tourism NI operates under the Tourism (Northern Ireland) Order 1992. Tourism NI's principal functions are to encourage tourism; to encourage the provision and improvement of tourist facilities and amenities; and the certification of tourism accommodation.

The Board consists of a Chairman and up to eight Non-Executive Board Members who are appointed, in ordinary circumstances, by the Minister for the Economy in accordance with the Code for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland. During 2023-24 eight new Board Members were appointed by the Secretary of State, details of which are included on page 22.

The Board and its three Committees take an objective long-term view of the business, providing strategic oversight and scrutiny to assist the Accounting Officer in meeting his Corporate Governance responsibilities. The performance of Board Members is formally assessed by the Chairman on an annual basis. The Board meets a minimum of eight times per year.

The Board has corporate responsibility for ensuring that Tourism NI fulfils the aims and objectives set by the Department and approved by the Minister, and for promoting the efficient, economic and effective use of staff and other resources by Tourism NI. To this end, and in pursuit of its wider corporate responsibilities, the Board:

- establishes the overall strategic direction of Tourism NI within the policy and resources framework determined by the Department;
- ensures that the Department is kept informed of any changes which are likely to impact on the strategic direction of Tourism NI or on the attainability of its targets and determine the steps needed to deal with such changes;
- ensures that any statutory or administrative requirements for the use of public funds are complied with; that the Board operates within the limits of its statutory authority and any delegated authority agreed with the Department of Economy, and in accordance with any other conditions relating to the use of public funds; and that, in reaching decisions, the Board

takes into account guidance issued by the Department of Finance and the Department of Economy;

- ensures that the Board receives and reviews regular financial information concerning the management of Tourism NI; is informed in a timely manner about any concerns relating to the activities of Tourism NI; and provides positive assurance to the Department of Economy that appropriate action has been taken on such concerns;
- demonstrates and ensures high standards of corporate governance are observed at all times. This includes using the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, Marketing Committee and Finance & Casework Committee to help the Board address key risks facing Tourism NI; and
- appoints a Chief Executive of Tourism NI subject to the approval of the Department and, in consultation with the Department, sets performance objectives and remuneration terms linked to these objectives for the Chief Executive which give due weight to the proper management and use of public monies.

Tourism NI Board composition during 2023-24

In early 2023, the Department for Economy commenced a process to appoint new Members to the Board of Tourism NI. Five members were due to end their full term at 31 March 2023 with a further three Members due to end their first term on 31 May 2023. The intention was to appoint five new Members and to re-appoint the remaining three members for a second term.

In late March 2023 Tourism NI was advised that, in common with a number of other NICS bodies, Board members could not be appointed in the absence of a Minister. This also applied to the re-appointment of Members, or extension of any terms. As a consequence, Tourism NI found itself in the position of having only a single Board Member – its Chairman – in post from 31 May 2023.

On 10 July 2023 Tourism NI was advised that the required Statutory Instrument, *The Northern Ireland (Ministerial Appointment Functions) Regulations 2023*, was laid in Parliament with an effective date of 11 July 2023. This legislative change allowed the Secretary of State to exercise the Northern Ireland Ministers' appointment functions. Subsequently, five new Members were appointed to the Tourism NI Board with effect from 8 August 2023. Three further appointments were made on 27 November 2023.

The main impact on the organisation during this period was on the governance arrangements, processes and approvals. As well as missing two scheduled Board meetings between April-July 2023, all sub-committee meetings also had to be cancelled. This meant that any items requiring Board approval, via the Finance & Casework Committee or Audit & Risk Assurance Committee, could not be progressed. Very quickly, the Executive Leadership Team worked to identify these items and determined that the impact on operations would significantly increase if the situation were to continue beyond end of August. This information was provided to the Department to inform submissions to the NIO. In the interim a number of decisions had to be delayed, for example approval for the 2023-24 capital funding programme. The last Board meeting of 2022-23 was held on 30 March, during which a draft 2023-24 Operating Plan and Risk Register were discussed and agreed on the basis of an indicative budget allocation. This allowed Tourism NI to continue with the agreed activities for the first five months of the year when there was no Board in place. The final 2023-24 Operating Plan and budget allocation was subsequently approved by the Board when it convened its first meeting with six members on 31 August 2023. All other priority issues were taken to the Board at its first meeting

including the Q3 Performance Reports and Risk Reports. At the first meeting after the remaining members were appointed, in December 2023, the Board appointed Members to the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) and the Finance & Casework Committee. Both sub-Committees met in January 2024 and normal governance and reporting structures have resumed. In March 2023, Tourism NI engaged Deloitte to undertake an independent Board Effectiveness Review of the Tourism NI Board for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023. This work commenced with the Board Members in post at that time; however due to the circumstances noted above this work was forced to pause. Deloitte resumed work in 2023-24 and issued a final report on 8 March 2024. Overall, the survey results indicated that the Board was operating effectively during the period under review. Some areas for improvement were identified, these were implemented by the Board in 2024-25.

The Board appointed John West as a strategic advisor to the Board and sub-committees.

Board Performance and Effectiveness

As noted above, in the period between the appointment of the five new Members on 8 August and the financial year end on 31 March 2024, the Tourism NI Board met on six occasions. Details of the attendance of members during the year are shown below:

Board Member	Number of Meetings Attended	Out of a Possible
Ellvena Graham (Chair from 1 July 2022)	6	6
Aileen Martin (appointed 8 August 2023)	5	6
Aine Gallagher (appointed 8 August 2023)	6	6
Ciaran O'Neill (appointed 8 August 2023)	5	6
Colin Johnston (appointed 8 August 2023)	5	6
Linda MacHugh (appointed 8 August 2023)	6	6
John Hood (appointed 27 November 2023)	3	3
Karly Greene (appointed 27 November 2023)	3	3
Michael Counahan (appointed 27 November 2023)	3	3
John West (term ended 31 May 2023)	-	-
Patricia Corbett (term ended 31 May 2023)	-	-
Anya O'Connor (term ended 31 May 2023)	-	-

John West, as Strategic Advisor attended 4 out of a possible 4 meetings.

In addition to meetings held at Tourism NI's headquarters, the Board met at the Ebrington Hotel, Derry-Londonderry in November 2023 and at Killeavy Castle, Newry in March 2024. The Board also held a facilitated workshop with the Executive Leadership Team over two days at the Kingfisher Hotel in Templepatrick, to consider future strategic direction and the objectives of both a new Tourism NI Corporate Plan and its Operating Plan for 2024-25, as well as how these could contribute towards the delivery of a new Tourism Strategy then in development by DfE. This workshop was attended by all Board Members. A Board induction programme was in place throughout the year and training sessions were attended by all new Board Members.

In its regularly scheduled meetings, the Board focussed on the strategic objectives of Tourism NI, as set out in the Operating Plan, and received quarterly reports on monitored performance against these targets. The Board also received management information reports including Finance, Risk Management and People & Organisational Development to discharge its duties.

The Board, in discharging its responsibilities, delegates the day-to-day management of Tourism NI to the Executive Leadership Team (ELT). The ELT is responsible for implementing the strategy of the organisation and formulating robust policies and strategies in pursuance of corporate aims and objectives.

The Board also continued its participation in the Boardroom Apprentice programme which assists individuals from the business community in gaining experience of the roles and responsibilities involved in taking up a public appointment. Stephen Garvin's term as Boardroom Apprentice ended on 31 August. Diane Edgington of the Labour Relations Agency joined meetings of the Board and its sub-committees as Apprentice, for a twelve-month period commencing on 1 September 2023.

Key Issues Considered by the Board

An immediate priority following the appointment of the new Board Members in August was to secure final approval of the 2023-24 Operating Plan and Budget, following on from 'in principle' approval granted by the previous Board, ahead of the budget allocation being confirmed.

Throughout the year the Board also received updates on the International Tourism Events Funding Programme (ITEFP) as well as preparations for the delivery of major events including the return of the Irish Open in 2024 and the Open Championship in 2025, as well as the UEFA European Championships then planned for 2028. Also discussed were staff and financial resources to implement a new Customer Relationship Management System and to establish a Tourism NI Data Hub. An overview of Tourism NI's current policies was presented and the Board proposed setting in place a process by which policies could be reviewed and updated more systematically. The Board also considered Tourism NI's role as the Investment Decision Maker for tourism projects within the City & Region Deals.

Once the full complement of new Members was appointed, the Board agreed new membership and terms of reference for its three sub-committees. The Board also approved a new Partnership Agreement with the Department for the Economy, setting out the roles and responsibilities of DfE and Tourism NI respectively. Also presented were the findings of a review by Deloitte of the Board's effectiveness, that had been commenced in spring 2023 ahead of the departure of the previous Board Members.

In addition to quarterly reports setting out Tourism NI's performance against its Operating Plan targets, the Board continued to receive regular updates on visitor performance and market outlook updates providing analysis of emergent trends in visitor behaviour. Each Board meeting also saw reports presented on the Chair's engagements, from the Chief Executive on current operational and strategic issues, and from the Chairs of the Board's Sub-Committees on the proceedings at their meetings.

Other key issues the Board considered during 2023-24 included:

- Updates on the preparation of Tourism NI's Annual Report and Accounts for 2022-23;
- Development of a Tourism NI e-learning platform;
- Tourism NI's cyber security infrastructure, and its IT / digital resource and capabilities;

- Recommendations to the Board by the Finance and Casework Committee on support for capital projects and events;
- Licensing of the TXGB online sales platform from Visit Britain;
- Proposals for changes to the fee structures for inspection of visitor accommodation;
- Requests for Board approval of Direct Award Contracts;
- The implications for Tourism NI of an independent review of Invest NI; and
- Reports on HR issues.

The new Board also undertook a programme of stakeholder engagement aligned to its external Board Meetings. The Board held dinner discussions with tourism industry figures and local authority representatives ahead of its meetings in the Ebrington Hotel, Derry-Londonderry and at Killeavy Castle, where the Board was joined by the Minister for the Economy. Ahead of its February meeting in Belfast the Board also had a dinner with representatives of the Northern Ireland Tourism Alliance (NITA), the Northern Ireland Hotels Federation (NIHF) and Hospitality Ulster.

The Audit And Risk Assurance Committee

The work of the Board is supported and advised by an Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. The Committee includes three Non-Executive members, the Board's Strategic Advisor and one independent member. The Chief Executive, Director of Corporate Services, Head of Financial Accounts, Internal Audit Service (IAS) and External Audit (NIAO) and a representative from DfE are invited to attend all meetings.

The Committee supports the Board and the Accounting Officer by reviewing the comprehensiveness, reliability and integrity of assurances in meeting the Board and Accounting Officer's responsibilities. This includes the risk management framework and internal control environment, and making recommendations to the Board on potential areas for improvement. The Committee reviews the Annual Report and Financial Statements before recommending to the Board for approval.

Meetings of the Committee were suspended following the departure of five Board Members at the end of March 2023. Following the appointment a full complement of new Members, at its meeting in December 2023, the Board appointed a new Committee consisting of Áine Gallagher, Colin Johnston and John Hood. Gerard Byrne continued in his role as the independent Committee member and John West also attended meetings in his role as the Board's Strategic Advisor. The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee was chaired by Áine Gallagher. During the remainder of the year the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee met twice. Details of the attendance of members during the year is shown below:

Committee Member	Meetings Attended	Out of a possible
Aine Gallagher (Chair)	2	2
Colin Johnston	2	2
John Hood	2	2
Gerard Byrne (Independent)	2	2
John West (Strategic Advisor)	2	2

Matters considered by the Committee at its meetings included the following:

- Review and approval of the Terms of Reference;
- NIAO Audit Strategy 2022-23;
- Draft Annual Report & Accounts 2022-23;
- Draft Governance Statement for 2022-23;
- Internal Audit Service Charter for 2023-26;
- IAS final reports on Corporate Governance and Risk Management;
- The IAS Annual Report and Opinion for 2022-23;
- Quarterly Risk Register reporting;
- Policy framework and assurance mapping;
- Review and discussion of all outstanding Internal Audit Recommendations;
- Data Security;
- Guidance issued;
- Information Security;
- Fraud Notifications; and
- Direct Award Contracts.

The Finance And Casework Committee

As with the Audit Committee, meetings of the Finance and Casework Committee were suspended following the departure of five Board Members on 31 March 2023. Following the appointment of five new Board Members on 8 August 2023, an ad-hoc meeting of the committee was convened on 28 September to consider approval of revised projects under the Experience Development Programme. This ad-hoc committee was attended by Áine Gallagher, Linda MacHugh and Ciaran O'Neill as members.

Once three further Board Members were appointed on 27 November, the Board then agreed to appoint a new Finance & Casework Committee, which met twice before the end of the financial year.

The Committee includes three non-executive members and is attended by the Board's Strategic Advisor. The Director of Corporate Services, the Director of Business Support and Events, the Head of Regions and Head of Programmes are invited to attend meetings as required. The new Committee was chaired by Linda MacHugh.

Details of the attendance of members during the year 2023-24 are shown below:

Committee Member	Meetings Attended	Out of a possible
Linda MacHugh (Chair)	2	2
Ciaran O'Neill	2	2
Michael Counahan	2	2
John West	2	2

In its meetings, the Committee reviewed and updated its Terms of Reference. It also considered reports on Tourism NI's budget position and progress on spend in the approach to the end of the financial year.

It received an update on the preparations for the Irish Open, and discussed conditions of offers of support for tourism projects in the City & Region Growth Deals programme. The Committee also discussed a business case for the Connected Causeway project and support for the Causeway Coast & Glens Heritage Trust and Mourne Heritage Trust. The Committee also approved a number of requests to revoke the certification of accommodation facilities, where these were found to be in breach of standards.

The Marketing Committee

The Marketing Sub-Committee did not meet during the year 2023-24 year, due to the departure of the previous Board Members and the long-term absence of the Director of Marketing. In December 2023 the Board agreed to appoint new members to the Committee consisting of Karly Greene (Chair), Colin Johnston and Aileen Martin.

The Executive Leadership Team (formerly SMT)

During the 2023-24 year, the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) met as follows:

- Quarterly to formally review the operating plan, budget, HR issues and risk management and for oversight / review of progress on key projects;
- Monthly to review the reports on performance on finance, governance, procurement and to monitor risk and progress on key projects; and
- Fortnightly to discuss ongoing operational issues.

As noted on page 30 regarding the new management structure, from July 2023 the newly formed Executive Leadership Team meet fortnightly in place of the current SMT meetings, with members of the wider SMT invited to join meetings as relevant or if there is an item of particular interest.

Members of the Executive Leadership Team meet with the DfE Partnership Team as part of the quarterly Oversight and Liaison (O&L) meetings to report on and discuss Tourism NI's Performance, Governance, Risk, Policy and Finances alongside any other topical areas. The agenda and minutes are shared with Tourism NI's Audit & Assurance Committee.

Conflicts Of Interest

All interests of both Board Members and the Executive Leadership Team are recorded on a Register of Interests. This is updated as any new appointments occur to ensure that any conflict is recognised immediately. Conflicts of interest are also declared at the beginning of all Board, Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, Finance and Casework Committee, and Marketing Committee meetings and Members will excuse themselves from the relevant discussion or, if appropriate, remain for the discussion but not participate in decision-making.

Conflicts were declared twice at Board meetings during the year. At the meeting on 2 October 2023 three Board Members declared a conflict in respect of a request to approve a Direct Award Contract for management and operation of a Co-Operative Marketing Fund, given their links to the accommodation sector. It was agreed that as the decision was to be made by correspondence, the

Members in question would not be part of that process and relevant papers should not be circulated to them.

The same three Members declared interests at the Board Meeting on 21 March 2024 in relation to a discussion of fee increases for accommodation inspections. The Board agreed that the Members in question could participate in the discussion before withdrawing from the meeting to permit the Board to make a decision.

No conflicts of interest were declared at meetings of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

One interest was declared at a Finance and Casework Committee meeting, relating to the Connected Causeway project but the Committee agreed that this interest did not represent a conflict and the individual was not required to withdraw from the meeting.

As the Marketing Sub-Committee did not meet, no conflicts of interest were declared in relation to its work.

Tourism NI has a policy for Directorship on External Boards to provide greater clarity for Board Members and staff members alike about the process for accepting invitations to sit on External Boards. The process for dealing with Conflicts of Interest is held centrally by HR and is available to all staff and members of the Board.

Business Planning

The Annual Operating Plan is a key reference tool for setting organisational aims and objectives. It provides the framework to ensure that Tourism NI makes best use of available financial, staff, and technological resources, and that budgets are aligned to the plan following a robust budget challenge process. The budget process challenges managers to demonstrate efficiency and value for money in the provision of services to meet the needs of our stakeholders.

Tourism NI's Annual Operating Plan for 2023-24 is set in the context of the 10X Economic Vision. The Operating Plan was approved by the Board and the Department for the Economy (DfE). Formal reporting against Operating Plan objectives and budget to the Board and DfE is on a quarterly basis.

The Board and the ELT regularly review and monitor performance against business objectives and challenge managers at all levels to ensure business targets and objectives are achieved.

Risk Management

Tourism NI aims to manage risk at a reasonable level to achieve its policies, aims and objectives. As Accounting Officer, it is my responsibility to ensure that appropriate risk management processes are in place within the organisation. The aim is not to eliminate all risk, but to mitigate risk through effective strategies and processes which facilitate decision-making and ensure competitiveness and innovation, whilst providing confidence to key stakeholders that any associated risk is being actively and effectively managed.

The Tourism NI Risk Management Framework aligns with the HM Treasury Orange Book guidance, outlines the processes for identifying and controlling risk, and sets out the responsibilities for risk

management across all levels of the organisation. The responsibility for setting the Tourism NI risk appetite rests with the Tourism NI Board.

Risk management is fully incorporated into the corporate planning and decision-making processes, and Tourism NI has in place a Corporate Risk Register that is reviewed by the Executive Leadership Team on a quarterly basis. Within the Corporate Risk Register, the appropriate controls and actions are identified and monitored to manage and mitigate the likelihood and impact of risk, and ensure organisational objectives and targets are achieved.

In March 2023 the Corporate Risk Register was subject to a comprehensive review, involving the Tourism NI Board, Senior Management Team and members of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. The outworking of this review was the development of a Risk Register for 2023-24 which reflects the current risks, challenges, and opportunities faced by Tourism NI as an organisation, as well as those of the wider NI Tourism Industry.

Risks, controls and actions within the Corporate Risk Register are reviewed and updated on a regular basis, taking account of any new risks identified by the ELT and with any new information on existing risks.

A Risk Report is presented to the Board and Audit and Risk Assurance Committee to facilitate the monitoring and review any significant risks that could prevent Tourism NI achieving its strategic goals. The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee has responsibility for ensuring an appropriate risk management process is embedded throughout the organisation and that appropriate training is given to support this. Any recommendations made by the Committee are reported through the annual report to the Board.

The Tourism NI Risk Register is reported to DfE through quarterly Oversight and Liaison Committee meetings.

Annual Assurance Statements

As Accounting Officer, I provide Bi-Annual Assurance Statements to DfE regarding the system of internal controls. This is supported by regular accountability meetings with senior DfE Officials which monitors organisational progress against plans and targets. This is also supplemented by meeting with the Board Chair, the Chief Executive, and DfE Officials after every Board meeting.

As part of the assurance process for DfE, I have delegated responsibility to Directors and other Senior Managers to provide me with mid-year and annual assurance statements in respect of their compliance with corporate governance arrangements, within their respective areas of responsibility. Assurance statements are scrutinised and challenged by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee prior to submission.

Data Security

As Accounting Officer, I have overall responsibility for ensuring that information used for operational and reporting purposes is handled appropriately and that risks are assessed and mitigated to an acceptable level. This responsibility is discharged through the Director of Corporate Services, who is the Senior Information Risk Officer (SIRO) and provides focus for the management of information risk at SMT and Board level. He has responsibility for the overall information risk policy and for advising the Accounting Officer on the information risk aspects of the governance arrangements. The SIRO is supported in this role by the IT Manager who has day to day responsibility for information management and security; the integrity of electronic information; and contingency and business continuity arrangements. A letter of assurance is provided to DfE on information governance on an annual basis.

Tourism NI re-accredited with the IASME Cyber Essentials certificates during the year.

There were 2 minor Data Related Incidents to report in 2023-24 (2022-23: none) neither of which required reporting to the ICO.

Internal Audit

The Internal Audit function for Tourism NI is undertaken by Internal Audit Service (IAS), Department of Finance. Internal audit services are delivered in accordance with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. The work of IAS is informed by an analysis of the risks to which Tourism NI is exposed. The annual Audit Plan is based on this risk analysis and is designed to provide regular Internal Audit Reviews and assessment on our systems, processes and procedures.

During the 2023-24 year, a total of three audits were included on the 2023-24 audit plan alongside four areas of work brought forward from 2022-23; three audits which commenced in 2022-23 and one audit deferred to the 2023-24 plan. Of the three audits completed from the 2022-23 plan and the three audits completed from the 2023-24 plan, five were issued with a Satisfactory opinion. One report issued with a Limited opinion regarding the Co-Operative Marketing Scheme due to mechanism by which the scheme operated being ultra vires, further details are outlined on page 44.

IAS continued to provide advice and guidance throughout the 2023-24 year with regards to internal controls, risk mitigation, fraud and error etc.

The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee provides scrutiny and oversight of the Internal Audit Plans and subsequent Reports and ensures that 'management responses' to recommendations are implemented. All Internal Audit Recommendations are held centrally, and their progress closely monitored and challenged. Annually, IAS provides Tourism NI with a report on their activity. This Report includes their independent opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Tourism NI's risk management, control and governance processes.

The overall audit opinion for 2023-24 was "Satisfactory".

In February 2025, a limited opinion audit report was issued on Procurement and Contract Management identifying a number of Priority 2 and Priority 3 recommendations which fall under three themes; Central oversight, Retention of supporting evidence and Staff training. The report was discussed with the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and the Board in March 2025 and management outlined steps

already taken to date to address a number of recommendations. Throughout 2025-26 management will work to implement all recommendations and progress will be reported through the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

External Audit

The External Audit of our Statutory Financial Statements is undertaken by the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General, in accordance with Auditing Standards issued by the Financial Reporting Council. This independent scrutiny of the Financial Statements provides me with additional assurance in respect of financial regularity.

The introduction of Review of Financial Process (ROFP), and the associated pressures this placed on the audit process across the NICS, combined with a temporary pause in work undertaken by NIAO to allow for the completion of an external review commissioned by the Board, resulted in a delay to the 2022-23 audit. The 2022-23 draft Report to those charged with Governance (RTTCWG) was presented to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee on 3 March 2025, with one recommendation made which is being progressed. The External Audit Strategy for 2023-24 has also been presented to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

Quality Of Data Used By Tourism NI Board

The Tourism NI Board uses information based on a number of data sources. In relation to performance targets, the Board draws assurance from the fact that a number of the data sets used are also utilised for the publication of official or National Statistics or reputable sources. Tourism NI also commissions independent economic appraisals for capital investment decisions and for the evaluation of key activities such as events. Data relating to Finance and HR is derived from systems that are subject to regular scrutiny by DoF's Internal Audit Service. Information received by the Board allows the Board to discharge its duties with regard to its assurance needs, its decision making and its accountability obligations.

Ministerial Directions

No Ministerial Directions were received by Tourism NI in 2023-24 (2022-23: nil).

Financial Management

The organisational financial management arrangements conform to the requirements of Managing Public Money NI and other directions issued by the Department for the Economy. The Head of Financial Accounts and Head of Management Accounts have responsibility at SMT level for the proper management of the organisation's finances, this is reported to the Director of Corporate Services. Responsibility is delegated for the management of finances to other Head of Departments through the allocation of budgets.

Fraud Policy

Tourism NI promotes an anti-fraud culture which requires all staff to act with honesty and integrity at all times and to take appropriate steps to safeguard public assets. Tourism NI has implemented a range of policies and procedures that are designed to ensure probity, business integrity and minimise the likelihood and impact of incidence of fraud arising. The Head of Financial Accounting is responsible for managing the Fraud Policy and the Fraud Response Plan. All reported suspected and actual frauds are fully investigated and robust actions are taken where fraud can be proven. The fraud policy was subject to a full review during 2024-25 and is due be signed off by the Board in early 2025-26.

Governance Issues Arising During The Year

Internal Audit Issues

The final IAS report for the 2023-24 year stated overall there is a satisfactory system of governance, risk management and control. All recommendations which were made by the internal auditors were accepted and have either been implemented or their implementation is in progress.

Other Governance Issues

Delays in completing the 2022-23 audit has resulted in an overlap with the completion of the 2023-24 audit. Therefore, the governance matters noted below are as at the time of finalising the Governance Statement, in March 2025, and are reported in both years of accounts.

Tourism NI Board

As noted on page 31, Tourism NI was unable to operate under its established governance framework after finding itself in the unprecedented circumstance of only having one Board member, being the Chairman, from 31 May 2023 to 8 August 2023.

This meant that any items requiring Board approval, via the Finance & Casework Committee or Audit & Risk Assurance Committee, could not be progressed. Very quickly, the Executive team worked to identify these items and determined that the impact on operations would significantly increase if the situation were to continue beyond end of August. This information was provided to the Department to inform submissions to the NIO. In the interim a number of decisions had to be delayed, for example approval for the 2023-24 capital funding programme.

Five new Board members were appointed on 8 August 2023 and the first Board meeting of 2023-24 was held on 31 August 2023, with all priority items included on the agenda. Board Members were appointed to all sub-Committees in December 2023 with the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee and Finance 7 Casework Committee having met in January 2024. In 2024-25, Tourism NI was granted approval to progress staff from the 1 August 2021 to 1 August 2023 payscales.

Tourism NI Pay Scales

TNI pay increases were withheld between 2014-15 and 2017-18 due to queries about pay scales and pension contributions with respect to the NICS “no better, no worse” policy. Authorisation to make payment for these years was given during 2018-19, however this was subject to the condition that the pay scales issue was addressed. During 2020-21 a business case was progressing with DfE to resolve the matter, however as this work was ongoing DoF advised the matter was being considered centrally, as it impacted a number of organisations. In the interim, approval was granted to progress Tourism NI staff from the 1 Aug 2017 pay scales onto the 1 August 2021 pay scales whilst awaiting DoF instruction on this wider issue, this payment was made to staff in 2022-23.

DoF has since instructed all bodies to complete a Business Case for review. Tourism NI’s Business Case is progressing through the approvals process. In 2024-25, Tourism NI was granted approval to progress staff from the 1 August 2021 to 1 August 2023 payscales.

Pay Policy

During the 2020-21 year, a review of the Temporary Promotions policy uncovered a difference in the pay policy applied by Tourism NI to staff under ‘deputising’ arrangements compared to the NICS policy. Tourism NI are required to apply the terms and conditions of service in line with NICS HR Policy, as per the Partnership Agreement. As of 1 June 2021, the correct NICS policy has been applied and internal controls and processes have been reviewed to ensure all pay policies are being applied correctly. This matter was reported through the correct governance channels, including ARAC, when it arose. Tourism NI had accrued for any historic payments and these payments to staff were made in September 2023 after a submission was issued to DfE in August 2023. This matter is now closed.

Payments to Tourism Ireland

Tourism Ireland was formed by the Government of the Republic of Ireland and the Northern Ireland Executive, under the auspices of the North/South Ministerial Council (NSMC). It is governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association and by the Financial Memorandum approved by the NSMC and prepares detailed three-year Corporate and one-year Operating Plans to guide its activities. It is jointly funded by both Department of Transport, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media (DTCAGSM) in the Republic of Ireland and the Department for the Economy (DfE) in Northern Ireland. As part of this funding arrangement, funding is made available via payments from Tourism NI directly to Tourism Ireland.

Tourism Ireland’s Financial Memorandum requires the Department of Finance and NSMC approval for its business plans however no NSMC meetings took place that would facilitate the approval of the 2023 or 2024 business plans in the year of payment. Payments totalling £13,004k for core funding were paid to Tourism Ireland in 2023-24.

Whilst this process is outside the control of Tourism NI, arrangements are in place with DoF to ensure the legality of payments and the 2023 Business Plan was approved by Department of Finance in September 2023 allowing funding to be legally paid up to December 2023 for £13,004k. No further core funding was paid between January 2024 – March 2024. All payments made to Tourism Ireland between April 2023 – March 2024 were deemed irregular for a period of time, until 24 June 2024 when the

NSMC met and retrospectively approved Tourism Ireland's business plans for 2022, 2023 and 2024. Therefore, there is no irregular expenditure to be disclosed within Tourism NI's 2023-24 accounts.

Grading Scheme Legislation

Since June 2011, Tourism NI (TNI) has been operating a voluntary Quality Assurance Grading Scheme (QGS) for the serviced Accommodation Sector (comprising of Hotels, B&Bs, Guest Houses, Guest Accommodation and Hostels) under Article 21 of The Tourism (Northern Ireland) Order 1992 ("the 1992 Order"). At the end of the grading inspection, accommodation providers are assigned a grade rating of between one to five stars. The Scheme was extended in January 2012 to include the Self-Catering Sector. TNI charge a fee for this service.

During the 2022-23 year, it came to light that there are no regulations in place that set out the prescribed fees, and therefore, TNI does not have the authority to charge such fees. This resulted in the scheme being put on pause in November 2022 whilst work was undertaken to put in place the required fee Regulations. Furthermore, it has been confirmed that TNI did not have the power to extend this service to visitor attractions.

The Grading Inspection of Certified Tourist Establishments (Fees) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2023 came into effect on 15 August 2023 and the Quality Grading Scheme resumed from that date. All income and expenditure associated with this scheme up to 14 August 2023 is deemed irregular. The Visitor Servicing aspect of the Scheme remains closed and TNI is considering whether a replacement scheme can be put in place.

From the period 1 April 2012 to 14 August 2023, the Quality Grading Scheme income was £553,404 and expenditure was £1,122,217 (NIL income and £5,644 expenditure relating to the period 1 April 23 to 14 August 2023). The cumulative deficit on the Quality Grading Scheme to the 14 August was £568,813 (£5,644 of which relates to 2023-24). All cumulative income and cumulative expenditure figures noted above are deemed to be irregular as the scheme operated without the required regulations to set prescribed fees as required by Article 20 (2) of the 1992 Order.

From the period 15 August 2023 to 31 March 2024 the Grading Scheme resumed and income of £20,569 and expenditure of £27,725 was reported, which is not deemed irregular.

The total deficit reported for 2023-24 is £12,800; income of £20,569 of which none is irregular and expenditure of £33,369 of which £5,644 is irregular. This expenditure is not deemed material to be further disclosed as such in the 2023-24 financial statements.

Tourism NI is currently undertaking a review of the costs incurred and potential fees to be charged so as to meet the objectives relating to full cost recovery as set out in Managing Public Money NI and DoF guidance. DoF approval has been obtained to operate the scheme in a deficit until this review is completed. New fees are expected to be in place by 1 April 2026.

Certification Scheme

Tourism NI has a Statutory responsibility for the certification of tourism accommodation under Article 20 of the 1992 Tourism Order. The Statutory Inspection of Tourist Establishments (Fees) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011 sets the fees to be charged.

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, DfE and Tourism NI (TNI) chose to waive the collection of fees associated with TNI's Certification Scheme for statutory re-inspections of existing accommodation establishments to support the industry's survival and recovery through the pandemic. TNI has since been informed that given its statutory responsibility to collect the fees and had no legal power to waive it, the waiving was considered irregular. Costs incurred in this period from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2022 total £127,731.

TNI has subsequently restarted the charging of fees from 1 April 2022 but has advised that this is not at full cost recovery due to the fact that the fees which it can charge are set out in the regulations associated with the scheme. Since 2011 the cumulative income received is £1,255,151 against a total cost of £1,594,876. Income generated from certification inspections from 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024 totals £144,576 and incurred costs of £184,847 resulting in irregular expenditure of £40,271 in this period. This expenditure is not deemed material irregular spend to disclose as such in the 2023-24 financial statements.

TNI is currently undertaking a review of the costs incurred and potential fees to be charged to achieve the objective of full cost recovery as outlined in Managing Public Money NI and DoF guidance and therefore regularise expenditure. Any future deficit will continue to be deemed irregular until the review is completed and implemented.

Co-Operative Marketing Fund

Tourism NI has been operating the Co-Operative Marketing Fund since 2016. This fund was established by TNI to encourage local tourism businesses to invest in marketing in order to secure a greater level of bookings and tourism expenditure in both the Republic of Ireland and domestic markets and in turn generate a much better rate of return on TNI's own promotional campaigns both in the Republic of Ireland (ROI) and the domestic markets. Tourism NI engaged the support of the Northern Ireland Hotels Federation (NIHF) in administering the scheme due to their ability to secure the applications to the fund from businesses within the accommodation sector which was the primary audience of the fund.

The fund operated successfully until paused in 2023. Over the period, where the fund operated alongside TNI's marketing campaigns, visitor spend from the Republic of Ireland rose from £60.9 million in 2015 to an estimated £233 million in 2022, a growth of 283%. Spend by domestic visitors rose from £219 million in 2015 to £267 million over the same period.

The scheme also met its objective in driving up the return on TNI's marketing investment. An independent post project evaluation of the campaigns in the Summer of 2022 showed a return of £148.76 per pound spent in the NI Market and £217.04 per pound spent in the ROI Market.

During 2023-24, an audit of the Co-Operative Marketing Fund was undertaken as part of the Internal Audit plan for that year. In September 2023, IAS advised that TNI should seek legal advice to assure itself that it had the powers to administer the fund in partnership with an external partner. Up to that point, TNI was of the understanding that Article 4, Part 2(a)-(k) of the 1992 Tourism Order (the Order) provided it with the necessary powers to administer the fund. Legal advice has since confirmed that the legislative authority to deliver financial assistance is governed by Article 11 of the Order and not Article 4. Article 11 does not provide TNI with the authority to engage another body in the administration of financial support to tourism businesses. Consequently, the delivery of the Co-operative Marketing Fund was deemed irregular. On receipt of this advice TNI has paused the activity whilst a review is carried out.

The total investment provided through this fund during the period 2016-17 to 2023-24 was £6,021,760 with expenditure £14,269 having been incurred in 2023-24. This expenditure is not deemed as material irregular spend to disclose as such in the 2023-24 financial statements.

In setting up and operating the Co-operative Marketing Fund, TNI did so on the understanding that it had the necessary powers to administer the fund. The fund was delivered with specific strategic objectives in mind and has been highly successful in the delivery of those objectives, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic. Approved business cases are in place for all the expenditure incurred under the programme and the money spent in accordance with the intention set out in the business case. The outcomes achieved clearly demonstrate that value for money has been obtained.

In response to the issues set out above the Tourism NI Board has appointed a suitably qualified and experienced external consultant to advise on the conformance of other areas of financial support provided by Tourism NI to third parties with the Tourism Order 1992. The consultant has also been asked to advise on any further changes which may be required to existing regulations, funding schemes and to the Order itself to allow Tourism NI to deliver on the objectives of the draft Northern Ireland Tourism Strategy.

Retrospective approval of IT Projects

Following an internal review of the 2024-25 work programme for the Digital Services team, Tourism NI reached out to DfE to clarify the definition of an “IT Project” and its application to the delegated limits as outlined in the Partnership Agreement. At the same time, clarification was sought regarding the application of the delegated limit for Capital projects.

Upon receipt of the definition from the Department, the Tourism NI finance team undertook a thorough review of all 2022-23 and 2023-24 expenditure which could be deemed IT and/or Capital spend. This review identified 18 business cases that exceeded TNI’s delegated limit in one or both of these categories which had not previously been submitted to the Department for approval. Consequently, the expenditure associated with these business cases required Departmental retrospective approval.

Tourism NI management took immediate action, informing the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, Board and the DfE Tourism Branch to maintain transparent working relationships and arrive at a swift solution. It was agreed that Tourism NI would seek retrospective approval for this expenditure and on 8 July 2023 the Department confirmed that all 18 business cases had received the appropriate

approvals. Therefore, there is no irregular expenditure to be disclosed within Tourism NI's 2023-24 accounts.

Going forward, Tourism NI management have an agreed process in place with the Department to submit a business case for review and there is a clear understanding of all delegated limits. Tourism NI Management have ensured that all staff are aware of the delegated limits to be applied to business cases containing IT or Capital expenditure and these cases will be overseen centrally by the Procurement team to ensure all appropriate approvals are obtained within appropriate timeframes.

External Review of Tourism NI's Legislative and Regulatory Framework

In response to the issues set out above the Tourism NI Board, with the agreement of DfE, appointed a suitably qualified and experienced external consultant to advise on the conformance of other areas of financial support provided by Tourism NI to third parties with the Tourism Order 1992. The consultant was also asked to advise on any further changes which may be required to existing regulations, funding schemes and to the Order itself to allow Tourism NI to deliver on the objectives of the draft Northern Ireland Tourism Strategy.

A report was presented to the Tourism NI Board on 14 August 2024 which outlined the findings from the review and proposed recommendations for consideration. The Tourism NI Board, alongside the Department, agreed to take on all recommendations and an action plan was approved with progress against the plan subsequently reported through the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee. A key recommendation in the report was for DfE to secure DSO legal advice to confirm the vires under the Tourism (NI) Order 1992 around the mechanisms in place for number of areas of income and expenditure. This largely focussed on funding schemes and the use of Service Level Agreements.

This was discussed in detail at the Tourism NI Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meeting on 8 August 2024 and it was agreed that Tourism NI management would undertake a detailed review of all income and expenditure for 2022-23 and 2023-24 to provide the Board and Department with the required assurance over all expenditure and not solely the few areas mentioned specifically in the report.

This work concluded in December 2024 with the Department providing DSO advice. The review did not identify any other areas of irregular spend other than the £14,269 relating to the Co-Operative Marketing Scheme, as detailed on page 44, which was already an known to all parties and was a contributing factor in commissioning the external review.

The review identified one area of expenditure which is deemed to be a breach of internal controls, this relates to using Destination Marketing Companies (DMCs) or Tour Operators for Familiarisation Trips (FAM Trips). Whilst there was the appropriate business case approval in place, these items should have followed the procurement route of a DAC. The total spend in 2023-24 was £20k which is immaterial however going forward Tourism NI will ensure a proper procurement route is followed for this area of expenditure.

In summary, it was concluded that all other current arrangements in place are within the vires of Tourism NI. However, there is an understanding within Tourism NI and DfE that the Tourism (NI) Order 1992 is outdated. A working group has been established to take forward a review of the legislation and associated funding schemes. In the interim, all staff are aware of the importance of ensuring all activity, and the mechanism by which it is delivered, is within the scope of the legislation.

Actual, Attempted and Suspected Frauds

There were no actual or attempted frauds during the year 2023-24 (2022-23: nil).

Conclusion

As Accounting Officer, I also have responsibility for reviewing the effectiveness of the Governance arrangements. This review is informed by Executive Directors within Tourism NI who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance framework and the work of Internal and External Auditors and their comments and recommendations as well as the consideration of recommendations received from the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. I have advised the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee of my review of the governance arrangements and my plans for continuous improvement of the governance arrangements.

Beyond those specific issues listed previously, I can confirm that there have been no other governance issues identified during the year that are considered significant in relation to Tourism NI's overall ability to achieve its corporate aims and objectives and that the governance arrangements, as detailed above, provide assurances of the effectiveness of the systems of corporate governance in place within Tourism NI.

Tourism NI continues to review and strengthen its governance and internal controls arrangements in line with Government guidance, audit recommendations and best practice.

Remuneration & Staff Report

The Remuneration and Staff report sets out Tourism NI's remuneration policy for our Board Members and the two management teams in operation throughout 2023-24, being the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and Senior Management Team (SMT). It reports on how that policy has been implemented and details the amounts awarded to Board Members, ELT and SMT. It also provides details on remuneration and staff that the Northern Ireland Assembly and others see as key to accountability.

Remuneration Report

Remuneration Policy

Chairman and Board Members

The Chairman and Board Members are appointed in accordance with the Code of Practice of the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland. The Chairman and Board Members are appointed for a fixed period of up to three years. Thereafter they may be reappointed in accordance with the Code of Practice.

The remuneration of the Chairman and Board is set by Department for the Economy (DfE). Increases are calculated in line with the recommendations of the Senior Salaries Review Board. There are no arrangements in place for the payment of a bonus. Neither the Chairman nor any Board Member receives pension contributions from Tourism NI or DfE. Tourism NI reimburses the Chairman and Board Members for any incidental expenses incurred for carrying out their duties relevant to the organisation.

Chief Executive and Senior Management Team

Progression for the Chief Executive and ELT is in accordance with the Senior Civil Service (SCS) Pay Strategy 2008, which is consistent with Cabinet Office guidelines. Their remuneration is subject to a pay band minima and maxima in line with pay arrangements in place for SCS staff. The effective date for pay award is 1 April each year.

Members of the Senior Management Team are paid in line with the Northern Ireland Civil Service pay agreement. Their performance against previously agreed targets is assessed annually by the Chief Executive. Pay increases are entirely performance based.

Directors are normally placed on the bottom point of the scale on appointment. Thereafter, there is annual incremental progression, based on performance, until the maximum of the scale is reached. A common incremental date of 1 August is used for all Directors.

Service Contracts

The Chief Executive, ELT and SMT appointments are made in accordance with Tourism NI's recruitment and selection policy. The policy requires appointments to be made on merit and on the basis of fair and open competition.

Unless otherwise stated, the employees covered by this report hold appointments that are open ended. Early termination, other than for misconduct, would result in the individual receiving compensation as set out in Tourism NI's redundancy policy.

Remuneration and Pension Entitlements (Audited)

The following sections provide details of the remuneration and pension interests of the Board, Executive Leadership and Senior Management Teams of Tourism NI.

Remuneration (including salary) and Pension Entitlements: Board Members (Audited)

Single total figure of remuneration						
Board	Salary (£'000)		Benefits in Kind (to nearest £100)		Total (£'000)	
	2023-24	2022-23	2023-24	2022-23	2023-24	2022-23
Ellvena Graham Chairperson	25-30	20-25	-	-	25-30	20-25
Aileen Martin* Board Member	0-5 (5-10 FTE)	N/A			0-5 (5-10 FTE)	N/A
Aine Gallagher* Board Member	0-5 (5-10 FTE)	N/A	-	-	0-5 (5-10 FTE)	N/A
Ciaran O'Neill* Board Member	0-5 (5-10 FTE)	N/A	-	-	0-5 (5-10 FTE)	N/A
Colin Johnston* Board Member	0-5 (5-10 FTE)	N/A	-	-	0-5 (5-10 FTE)	N/A
John Hood* Board Member	0-5 (5-10 FTE)	N/A	-	-	0-5 (5-10 FTE)	N/A
Karly Greene* Board Member	0-5 (5-10 FTE)	N/A	-	-	0-5 (5-10 FTE)	N/A
John West* Board Member	0-5 (5-10 FTE)	5-10	-	-	0-5 (5-10 FTE)	5-10
Linda MacHugh* Board Member	0-5 (5-10 FTE)	N/A	-	-	0-5 (5-10 FTE)	N/A
Michael Counahan* Board Member	0-5 (5-10 FTE)	N/A	-	-	0-5 (5-10 FTE)	N/A
Patricia Corbett* Board Member	0-5 (5-10 FTE)	5-10	-	-	0-5 (5-10 FTE)	5-10

Aileen Martin appointed 8th August 2023
 Ciaran O'Neill appointed 8th August
 John Hood appointed 27th November 2023
 John West resigned 31st May 2023
 Michael Counahan appointed 27th November 2023

Aine Gallagher appointed 8th August 2023
 Colin Johnston appointed 8th August 2023
 Karly Green appointed 27th November 2023
 Linda MacHugh appointed 8th August 2023
 Patricia Corbett resigned 23rd May 2023

Tourism NI Board Members do not have any pension entitlements.

Remuneration (including salary) and Pension Entitlements – Executive Leadership and Senior Management Teams (Audited)

Senior Management Team	Salary (£'000)		Pension Benefits (to nearest £1,000)		Total (£'000)	
	2023-24	2022-23	2023-24	2022-23	2023-24	2022-23
John McGrillen* Chief Executive	105-110	115-120	-14	-37	90-95	75-80
Adrian Doherty* Director of Corporate Services	50-55 (75-80 FTE)	N/A	16	N/A	65-70	N/A
Naomi Waite* Director of Marketing	105-110 (75-80 FTE)	65-70	48	10	155-160	75-80
David Roberts Director of Strategic Development	80-85 (75-80 FTE)	75-80	28	24	105-110	100-105
Aine Kearney Director of Events	75-80	70-75	27	23	100-105	95-100
Eimear Callaghan Head of Programmes	55-60	65-70	18	13	70-75	65-70
Louise Fitzsimons Head of People and Organisational Development	50-55	50-55	18	17	70-75	65-70
Lesley Shannon Head of Financial Accounting	55-60	65-70	21	16	75-80	80-85
Chris Newell* Head of Management Accounting	5-10 (55-60 FTE)	N/A	3	N/A	10-15	N/A
Dot Erskine Director of Strategy and Policy	55-60	65-70	21	16	75-80	65-70
Ciaran Doherty Head of Regions	55-60	55-60	6	21	60-65	70-75
Ainsley McWilliams Head of Programmes	50-55	50-55	18	8	70-75	40-45
Siobhan McGuigan* Interim Head of Events	50-55	N/A	9	N/A	60-65	N/A
Anne Marie Donnelly* Head of Management Accounting	40-45 (50-55 FTE)	0-5	13	1	55-60	0-5
Una Foy* Head of Management Accounting	0-5 (50-55 FTE)	25-30	2	8	5-10	30-35

John McGrillen received back pay in 2022-23 which inflated the salary band hence the decrease in salary band in 2023-24

Adrian Doherty appointed 31st July 2023

Naomi Waite received back pay in 2023-24 which inflated the salary band hence why the salary is higher than the FTE

Chris Newell appointed 5th February 2024

Siobhan McGuigan was temporary promoted on 19th June 2023

Anne Marie Donnelly resigned on 5th January 2024

Una Foy resigned on 30th April 2023

During 2022-23 payment for two years backpay was made to all staff.

The salary figures included in the table above reflect what was paid to the individuals during 2023-24, which may include an element of back pay relating to the previous year.

The value of pension benefits accrued during the year is calculated as (the real increase in pension multiplied by 20) plus (the real increase in any lump sum) less (the contributions made by the individual). The real increases exclude increases due to inflation and any increase or decrease due to a transfer of pension rights.

Salary

'Salary' includes gross salary; overtime; recruitment and retention allowances; private office allowances and any other allowance to the extent that it is subject to UK taxation and any severance or ex-gratia payments. This report is based on actual payments made by Tourism NI and thus recorded in these accounts.

The payment of legitimate expenses is not part of the salary.

Bonuses

During the year 2023-24 there were no bonuses paid (2022-23: £Nil) to the Chief Executive and Senior Management Team.

Benefits in kind

The monetary value of benefits in kind covers any benefits provided by the employer and treated by the HM Revenue and Customs as a taxable emolument. There were no Benefits in Kind paid during 2023-24 (2022-23: £Nil).

Pay Ratios (Audited)

Reporting bodies are required to disclose the relationship between the remuneration of the highest-paid director in their organisation and the lower quartile, median and upper quartile remuneration of the organisation's workforce.

The banded remuneration of the highest paid Director in Tourism NI in the financial year 2023-24 was £105,000 - £110,000 (2022-23: £115,000 - £120,000). The relationship between the mid-point of this band and the remuneration of the organisation's workforce is disclosed below.

2023-24	25th Percentile	Median	75th Percentile
Total Remuneration (£)	26,017	32,328	39,748
Pay Ratio	4.13	3.33	2.70
2022-23	25th Percentile	Median	75th Percentile
Total Remuneration (£)	28,706	32,893	39,748
Pay Ratio	3.74	3.27	2.70

Total remuneration includes salary, non-consolidated performance-related pay, and benefits-in-kind. It does not include severance payments, employer pension contributions and the cash equivalent transfer value of pensions.

For 2023-24 and 2022-23, the 25th percentile, median and 75th percentile remuneration values consisted solely of salary payments.

In 2023-24, there were no employees that received remuneration in excess of the highest paid director (2022-23: Nil).

Pay ratios in 2023-24 remained in line with 2022-23.

Percentage Change in Remuneration

Reporting bodies are also required to disclose the percentage change from the previous financial year in the:

- a) salary and allowances, and
- b) performance pay and bonuses

of the highest paid director and of their employees as a whole.

The percentage changes in respect of Tourism NI are shown in the following table. It should be noted that the calculation for the highest paid director is based on the mid-point of the band within which their remuneration fell in each year.

Percentage change for:	2023-24 v 2022-23	2022-23 v 2021-22
Average employee salary and allowances	4.2%	5.5%
Highest paid director's salary and allowances	0.0%	4.9%
Average employee performance pay and bonuses	-	-
Highest paid director's performance pay and bonuses	-	-

No performance pay or bonuses were payable to the highest paid director or any employees in these years.

Pension Entitlements (Audited)

	Accrued pension at pension age as at 31/03/24 and related lump sum £'000	Real increase in pension and related lump sum at pension age £'000	CETV at 31/03/24 £'000	CETV at 31/03/23 £'000	Real increase in CETV £'000
John McGrillen Chief Executive Officer	55-60 Plus lump sum of 85-90	(0-5) Plus lump sum of (5-10)	1,289	1,228	(32)
Adrian Doherty* Director of Corporate Services	0-5 Plus lump sum of 0-5	0-2.5 Plus lump sum of 0-2.5	15	-	11
Naomi Waite Director of Marketing	15-20 Plus lump sum of 0-5	2.5-5 Plus lump sum of 0-2.5	228	170	37
David Roberts Director of Strategic Development	0-5 Plus lump sum of 0-5	0-2.5 Plus lump sum of 0-2.5	67	39	19
Aine Kearney Director of Corporate Services	10-15 Plus lump sum of 0-5	0-2.5 Plus lump sum of 0-2.5	197	161	19
Eimear Callaghan Head of Programmes	10-15 Plus lump sum of 0-5	0-2.5 Plus lump sum of 2-2.5	150	126	11
Louise Fitzsimmons* Head of People & Organisational Dev	15-20 Plus lump sum of 0-5	15-20 Plus lump sum of 0-2.5	244	13	226
Lesley McKeown Head of Financial Accounting	5-10 Plus lump sum of 0-5	0-2.5 Plus lump sum of 0-2.5	75	56	10
Una Foy* Head of Management Accounting	0-5 Plus lump sum of 0-5	0-2.5 Plus lump sum of 0-2.5	10	8	2
Dot Erskine Head of Strategy & Policy	5-10 Plus lump sum of 0-5	0-2.5 Plus lump sum of 0-2.5	109	82	17
Ciaran Doherty Head of Regions	20-25 Plus lump sum of 0-5	0-2.5 Plus lump sum of 0-2.5	341	308	7
Ainsley McWilliams Head of Programmes	0-5 Plus lump sum of 0-5	0-2.5 Plus lump sum of 0-2.5	48	28	14
Anne Marie Donnelly* Head of Management Accounting	0-5 Plus lump sum of 0-5	0-2.5 Plus lump sum of 0-2.5	11	1	6
Siobhan McGuigan* Interim Head of Events	5-10 Plus lump sum of 0-5	0-2.5 Plus lump sum of 0-2.5	87	73	7
Chris Newell* Head of Management Accounting	0-5 Plus lump sum of 0-5	0-2.5 Plus lump sum of 0-2.5	2	-	1

Adrian Doherty – mid year joiner, post started on 31st July 2023

Louise Fitzsimmons – member opted to combine files. Aggregation of previous service included in real increase in CETV

Una Foy – pro rata used due to mid year leaver on 30th April 2023

Anne Marie Donnelly – pro rata used due to mid year leaver on 5th January 2024

Siobhan McGuigan – mid year joiner, pro rata used as member was promoted to this post on 19th June 2023

Chris Newell – mid year joiner, started on 2nd February 2024

Tourism NI Board Members do not have any pension entitlements.

Pensions

Tourism NI participates in the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) for senior staff, which is also available to all employees. From 1 April 2015, the scheme changed to become a career average revalued earnings scheme which means that all active members will 'bank' pension savings each year into their pension accounts. The amount of pension banked each year from 1 April 2015 will equal 1/49th of the member's pensionable pay.

All current active members were moved to the new scheme on 1 April 2015 and will therefore have a pension at retirement composed of two elements: a final salary pension (on either 1/80th accrual and/or 1/60th accrual) and a career average revalued earnings pension. The final salary pension will be calculated on the final pay at retirement (less overtime and additional hours' payments). This is known as the 'final salary link'. Those members who were within 10 years of retirement at 1 April 2012 have a protection called the statutory underpin. This means that if they would have been better off under the old final salary scheme an additional amount of pension will be paid into their pension account at retirement or on reaching their old normal pension age (usually age 65).

From 1 April 2015, the death grants of an active member changes from being three times pensionable pay to be three times Assumed Pensionable Pay (APP). If the active member under the 2015 scheme also has deferred benefits or a pension in payment, then only the highest death grant is payable and not the sum of all death grants. Survivors' pensions continue to be payable to eligible parties. These benefits are generally calculated on a fraction of the deceased member's pensionable pay times the period of membership in the scheme plus an enhancement to take account of each year that could have been worked from the date of death to the deceased member's NPA. Medical retirement is possible in event of serious ill-health. In this case pensions are brought into payment early.

The scheme is funded by contributions made by both employees and employers. An actuarial valuation of the scheme is carried out every three years and the results of this valuation determine employers' contribution rates for the next three years. A triennial valuation was carried out as at 31 March 2022 and the outcome determined the employer contribution rates for the 3 years commencing 1 April 2023 which were set at 19.0% for the 2023-24, 2024-25 and 2025-26 financial years. Tiered employee contribution rates were introduced from 1 April 2009 and the employee contribution rates for 2023-24 are outlined below.

Pensionable Pay	Employee Contribution Rate 2023-24
Up to £16,900	5.5%
£16,901 to £26,000	5.8%
£26,001 to £43,400	6.5%
£43,401 to £52,800	6.8%
£52,801 to £104,700	8.5%
More than £104,700	10.5%

The accrued pension quoted is the pension the member is entitled to receive when they reach pension age, or immediately on ceasing to be an active member of the Scheme if they are at or over pension age. Pension age is state pension age or age 65 if higher.

The inflation rate used in 2023-24 calculations is 6.7% (2022-23 10.10%).

Cash Equivalent Transfer Value (CETV)

A Cash Equivalent Transfer Value (CETV) is the actuarially assessed capitalised value of the pension scheme benefits accrued by a member at a particular point in time. The benefits valued are the member's accrued benefits and any contingent spouse's pension payable from the scheme. A CETV is a payment made by a pension scheme or arrangement to secure pension benefits in another pension scheme or arrangement when the member leaves a scheme and chooses to transfer the benefits accrued in their former scheme. The pension figures shown relate to the benefits that the individual has accrued as a consequence of their total membership of the pension scheme, not just their service in a senior capacity to which disclosure applies.

The CETV figures, and from 2003-04 the other pension details, include the value of any pension benefit in another scheme or arrangement which the individual has transferred to the NICS pension arrangements. They also include any additional pension benefit accrued to the member as a result of their purchasing additional years of pension service in the scheme at their own cost. CETVs are calculated in accordance with The Occupational Pension Schemes (Transfer Values) Regulations 1996 (as amended) and do not take account of any actual or potential benefits resulting from Lifetime Allowance Tax which may be due when pension benefits are taken.

The lifetime allowance ended in April 2024 and was replaced by the Lump Sum Allowance and The Lump Sum and Death Benefit Allowance.

HM Treasury provides the assumptions for discount rates for calculating CETVs payable from the public service pension schemes. On 27 April 2023, HM Treasury published guidance on the basis for setting the discount rates for calculating cash equivalent transfer values payable by public service pension schemes. In their guidance of 27 April 2023, HM Treasury advised that, with immediate effect, the discount rate adopted of calculating CETVs should be in line with the new SCAPE discount rate of 1.7% above CPI inflation, superseding the previous SCAPE discount rate of 2.4% above CPI inflation. All else being the same, a lower SCAPE discount rate leads to higher CETVs. The HM Treasury Guidance of 27 April 2023 can be found at, www.gov.uk/government/publications/basis-for-setting-the-discount-rates-for-calculating-cash-equivalent-transfer-values-payable-by-public-service-pension-schemes.

Real Increase in CETV

This reflects the increase in CETV that is funded by the employer. It does not include the increase in accrued pension due to inflation, contributions paid by the employee (including the value of any benefits transferred from another pension scheme or arrangement) and uses common market valuation factors for the start and end of the period (which therefore disregards the effect of any changes in factors).

Compensation for Loss of Office and Early Retirement (Audited)

No member of the Executive Leadership team or Senior Management team received compensation for loss of office and no member retired early in either the current or previous year.

Staff Report

Analysis of Staff Costs (Audited)

	Permanently employed staff £000	Other £000	2023-24 Total £000	2022-23 Total £000
Wages and salaries	4,767	479	5,246	5,368
Social security costs	576	66	642	506
Pension costs	992	93	1,085	2,118
Sub Total	6,335	638	6,973	7,992
Less recoveries in respect of outward secondments	(15)	-	(15)	(76)
Staff costs charged to Net Expenditure Account	6,320	638	6,958	7,916
Of which:				
	Charged to Administration	Charged to programme	Charged to income	Total
	1,539	5,434	(15)	6,958
	1,539	5,434	(15)	6,958

Other costs are made up of temporary staff costs and board members.

Pensions Costs

IAS 19 requires employers participating in a defined benefit pension scheme to account for their share of assets and liabilities in the scheme. In preparing the Accounts for 2023-24 additional information has been included in note 14 and the valuation at 31 March 2024 has been included in the Statement of Financial Position. The latest full actuarial valuation of the scheme was at 31 March 2022.

Pension Benefits are provided through the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). This scheme is a defined benefits fund and is invested in suitable investments, managed by the Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Superannuation Scheme Committee (NILGOSC).

The employer contribution rate for 2023-24 was 19.0% (2022-23: 19.5%), and between 5.5% and 10.5% for the employee.

The total employer contribution paid under the scheme in 2023-24 was £1,007K (2022-23: £1,004K). Non-cash costs in relation to the current service were also incurred and are included in the figures disclosed in the above table.

The total employer contribution made for the Defined Contribution Scheme provided by Zurich for ROI employees in 2023-24 was £65,679 (2022-23: £ £51,056). For both 2023-24 and 2022-23, the contribution rates were 16% for the employer and 6% for the employee.

During the current financial year, a back payment of £21,798 was made to Zurich in respect of back dated pay awards.

During 2023-24 there was no early retirees (2022-23: Nil).

Average Number of Persons Employed:

The following section is subject to audit. The average number of whole-time equivalent persons employed during the year was as follows:

Division/Department	Permanently employed staff	Others	Total for 2023-24	Total for 2022-23
Directly Employed	121	-	121	105
Temporary Staff	-	11	11	10
Board Members	-	7	7	9
Overseas Staff	3	-	3	6
Total	124	18	142	130

Staff Composition (gender analysis) as at 31 March 2024

A breakdown of staff in Tourism NI is included below.

	2023-24			2022-23		
	Male	No. Female	Total	Male	No. Female	Total
Board Members	4	5	9	4	5	9
SMT*	4	6	10	3	9	12
Employees	36	101	137	40	96	136
Total	44	112	156	47	110	157

*Includes five members from ELT who are senior civil service staff (or equivalent) as defined with Grade 5 or above.

Sickness Absence Data

During the year 2023-24 Tourism NI recorded a staff sickness absenteeism rate of 4.62% or 10.3 days per employee (2022-23: 2.78% or 6.6 days).

Staff Turnover (Audited)

	2023-24	2022-23
Average Permanent FTEs during year	142	130
Number of Leavers (on Perm Contract)	16	10
Staff Turnover Rate	11.3%	7.7%

Other Employee Matters

Staff Engagement

During this Financial Year Tourism NI went through their We Invest in People Accreditation process and were delighted to be awarded Gold accreditation.

The We Invest in People Accreditation involved a staff survey and series of one-to-one interviews with employees from all sections and at all levels within the organisation. Seventy percent of employees (100) responded to the survey and 18 people were involved in the one-to-one interviews.

A detailed action plan was produced following the assessment which will ensure Tourism NI continues to be an employer of choice.

As a result of the action plan produced following the We Invest in People Assessment, Tourism NI has undertaken a review of Corporate Values. Engagement sessions with employees, management teams and Board Members have taken place and new Corporate Values and a Values Framework produced for implementation.

Employee Policies

Tourism NI aims to act as a good employer in all matters relating to its responsibilities and obligations for health and safety at work, ensuring that the way business is conducted does not harm the health and safety of staff, visitors, suppliers or third parties and making sure all legal requirements are met.

During this year a review was undertaken of all Tourism NI's Health and Safety related policies and practices to ensure they were compliant with statutory requirements and best practice for the hybrid working environment.

Tourism NI is committed to the development of its staff and to policies that enable them to best contribute to the performance and long-term effectiveness of the organisation. In particular, active involvement and communication with employees is conducted both directly and through the recognised Trade Union (NIPSA) in all relevant matters. The organisation is also committed to the continuing development of its staff and to maximising their contribution to the continuous improvement of service delivery.

Tourism NI gives full and fair consideration to applications for employment made by disabled persons, having regard to their particular aptitude and abilities, for the continuing employment of, and for arranging appropriate training for, employees of Tourism NI that have become disabled persons during the period when they were employed by the organisation, and otherwise for the training, career development and promotion of disabled persons employed by Tourism NI.

The Learning and Development function supports the development of all staff by providing internal and external training to develop skills and expertise. Tourism NI ensures that all learning interventions are aligned to the business strategy and organisational values.

In compliance with Business Appointment rules, Tourism NI is transparent in the advice given to individual applications for senior staff. Advice regarding specific business appointments has been published on the staff intranet.

Tourism NI values and welcomes diversity and is committed to creating a truly inclusive workplace for all. TNI continues to meet its statutory obligations under the Fair Employment & Treatment (NI) Order 1998, which includes submission of an annual Fair Employment Monitoring Return. In addition, TNI has due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and regard to the desirability of promoting good relations across a range of categories outlined in the Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 in carrying out its functions. Annual training on Section 75 obligations is mandatory for TNI staff. Further information on the Tourism NI's equality scheme is available on <https://www.tourismni.com/equality/>

Equality Scheme

Tourism NI is committed to upholding equality of opportunity and regard to the desirability of promoting good relations across persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

Tourism NI's Equality Scheme is developed in accordance with Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. It is available on www.tourismni.com.

Expenditure on Consultancy (Audited)

In 2023-24 there was £7,560 expenditure on consultancy (2022-23: £Nil).

Off-payroll Engagements (Audited)

There were no off-payroll payments in 2023-24 (2022-23: £Nil).

Compensation and Exit Packages for All Staff (Audited)

There were no exit packages in 2023-24 (2022-23: £Nil).

Assembly Accountability and Audit Report

The Assembly Accountability and Audit Report brings together the key Assembly accountability documents within the annual report and accounts.

Regularity of Expenditure (Audited)

Tourism NI's Accounting Officer has overarching responsibility for the propriety and regularity of the public finances and for keeping proper records and for safeguarding the assets of Tourism NI.

Disclosure of Material Irregular Expenditure

The Accounts Direction given by the Department for the Economy for 2023-24 requires NDPBs to disclose any material expenditure or income that has not been applied for the purposes intended by the relevant legislature or material transactions that have not confirmed to the authorities which govern them.

Any irregular expenditure incurred in the period is deemed immaterial.

Fees & Charges (Audited)¹

Certification of Tourist Accommodation	2023-24	2022-23
	£	£
Income	144,576	172,011
Cost	<u>(184,846)</u>	<u>(228,173)</u>
Surplus / (Deficit)	(40,270)	(56,163)

The financial objective of the certification of tourist accommodation is to recover the full cost of providing this service. This objective was not met in 2023-24. The Department for Economy and Department of Finance are aware of the deficit incurred on this scheme and Tourism NI is in the process of undertaking a full review of the cost model and associated fees with the view to implement a new fee structure. Until such times any deficit incurred on this scheme will be deemed irregular. Tourism NI has submitted a draft business case to DfE for review.

¹ various unit costs are charged for these services depending on the size and type of accommodation being certified and graded and that full details of the fees structure are given on the TNI website at <https://tourismni.com/startup-advice/tourist-accommodation-certification2/> and <https://tourismni.com/startup-advice/quality-grading/tourist-accommodation-grading/quality-grading-assessments/>

Grading of Tourist Accommodation	2023-24 £	2022-23 £
Income	20,569	45,685
Cost	<u>(33,369)</u>	<u>(72,839)</u>
Surplus / (Deficit)	(12,800)	(27,154)

The financial objective of the grading of tourist accommodation is to subsidise the cost of providing this service. This objective was not met in 2023-24. As disclosed in the governance statement on page 43 the Grading Scheme was paused from November 2022 to August 2023 whilst a review of the legislation was undertaken. During this period, all inspectors focussed on Certification visits.

The Department for Economy and Department of Finance are aware of the deficit incurred on this scheme and Tourism NI is in the process of undertaking a full review of the cost model and associated fees, with the view to implement a new fee structure. As disclosed in the Governance Statement on page 43, until 15 August 2023 there was no regulation in place to charge a fee for this service. Deficits incurred prior to this date are deemed irregular. In approving the process to implement the new regulation, the Department of Finance also provided approval for any future deficits incurred until the fee review is complete. Therefore, deficits incurred from 15 August 2024 onwards are not deemed irregular.

Remote Contingent Liabilities (Audited)

There were no remote contingent liabilities as at 31 March 2024 (2022-23: none).

Losses and special payments (Audited)

	2023-24 Amount £'000	2023-24 Number of Cases over £300k	2023-24 Number of Cases under £300k	2022-23 Amount £'000	2022-23 Number of Cases over £250k	2022-23 Number of Cases under £250k
Losses	3	-	23	-	-	-
Special Payments	21	-	5	-	-	-
Total	24	-	28	-	-	-

Losses and Special payments are defined in Managing Public Money (Northern Ireland). The 2023-24 losses relate to write off of bad debts (£2,838). The 2023-24 special payments relate to compromise agreements (£21,130).

Signed:



Accounting Officer
Date 15 April 2025

NORTHERN IRELAND TOURIST BOARD

THE CERTIFICATE AND REPORT OF THE COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL TO THE NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Opinion on financial statements

I certify that I have audited the financial statements of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board for the year ended 31 March 2024 under the Tourism (Northern Ireland) Order 1992. The financial statements comprise: Statements of Comprehensive Net Expenditure, Financial Position, Cash Flows, Changes in Taxpayers' Equity; and the related notes, including significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and UK adopted international accounting standards as interpreted and adapted by the Government Financial Reporting Manual.

I have also audited the information in the Accountability Report that is described in that report as having been audited.

In my opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board's state of affairs as at 31 March 2024 and of Northern Ireland Tourist Board's net expenditure for the year then ended; and
- have been properly prepared in accordance with Tourism (Northern Ireland) Order 1992 and Department for the Economy directions issued thereunder.

Opinion on regularity

In my opinion, in all material respects the expenditure and income recorded in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes intended by the Assembly and the financial transactions recorded in the financial statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

Basis for opinions

I conducted my audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (ISAs) (UK), applicable law and Practice Note 10 'Audit of Financial Statements and Regularity of Public Sector Bodies in the United Kingdom'. My responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of my certificate. My staff and I are independent of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to my audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard, and have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. I believe that the audit evidence obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinions.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, I have concluded that Northern Ireland Tourist Board's use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work I have performed, I have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the Northern Ireland Tourist Board's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

The going concern basis of accounting for Northern Ireland Tourist Board is adopted in consideration of the requirements set out in the Government Financial Reporting Manual, which require entities to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements where it anticipated that the services which they provide will continue into the future.

My responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Board and the Accounting Officer with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this certificate.

Other Information

The other information comprises the information included in the Annual Report other than the financial statements, the parts of the Accountability Report described in that report as having been audited, and my audit certificate. The Board and the Accounting Officer are responsible for the other information included in the annual report. My opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in my certificate I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

My responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or my knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If I identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, I am required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves.

If, based on the work I have performed, I conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, I am required to report that fact. I have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinion on other matters

In my opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the parts of the Accountability Report to be audited have been properly prepared in accordance with the Department for the Economy directions made under the Tourism (Northern Ireland) Order 1992; and
- the information given in the Performance Report and Accountability Report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements.

Matters on which I report by exception

In light of the knowledge and understanding of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, I have not identified material misstatements in the Performance Report and Accountability Report. I have nothing to report in respect of the following matters which I report to you if, in my opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept; or
- the financial statements and the parts of the Accountability Report to be audited are not in agreement with the accounting records; or
- certain disclosures of remuneration specified by the Government Financial Reporting Manual are not made; or
- I have not received all of the information and explanations I require for my audit; or
- the Governance Statement does not reflect compliance with the Department of Finance's guidance.

Responsibilities of the Board and Accounting Officer for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Statement of Accounting Officer Responsibilities, the Board and the Accounting Officer are responsible for:

- the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view;
- ensuring such internal controls are in place as deemed necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements to be free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error;
- ensuring the annual report, which includes the Remuneration and Staff Report is prepared in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework; and
- assessing the Northern Ireland Tourist Board's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Accounting Officer anticipates that the services provided by Northern Ireland Tourist Board will not continue to be provided in the future.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

My responsibility is to examine and certify the financial statements in accordance with the Tourism (Northern Ireland) Order 1992.

My objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error and to issue a certificate that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

I design procedures in line with my responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of non-compliance with laws and regulation, including fraud.

My procedures included:

- obtaining an understanding of the legal and regulatory framework applicable to the Northern Ireland Tourist Board through discussion with management and application of extensive public sector accountability knowledge. The key laws and regulations I considered included governing legislation and any other relevant laws and regulations identified;
- making enquires of management and those charged with governance on Northern Ireland Tourist Board's compliance with laws and regulations;
- making enquiries of internal audit, management and those charged with governance as to susceptibility to irregularity and fraud, their assessment of the risk of material misstatement due to fraud and irregularity, and their knowledge of actual, suspected and alleged fraud and irregularity;
- completing risk assessment procedures to assess the susceptibility of Northern Ireland Tourist Board's financial statements to material misstatement, including how fraud might occur. This included, but was not limited to, an engagement director led engagement team discussion on fraud to identify particular areas, transaction streams and business practices that may be susceptible to material misstatement due to fraud. As part of this discussion, I identified potential for fraud in the following areas: revenue recognition, expenditure recognition and posting of unusual journals;

- engagement director oversight to ensure the engagement team collectively had the appropriate competence, capabilities and skills to identify or recognise non-compliance with the applicable legal and regulatory framework throughout the audit;
- designing audit procedures to address specific laws and regulations which the engagement team considered to have a direct material effect on the financial statements in terms of misstatement and irregularity, including fraud. These audit procedures included, but were not limited to, reading board and committee minutes, and agreeing financial statement disclosures to underlying supporting documentation and approvals as appropriate;
- addressing the risk of fraud as a result of management override of controls by:
 - performing analytical procedures to identify unusual or unexpected relationships or movements;
 - testing journal entries to identify potential anomalies, and inappropriate or unauthorised adjustments;
 - assessing whether judgements and other assumptions made in determining accounting estimates were indicative of potential bias; and
 - investigating significant or unusual transactions made outside of the normal course of business; and
- applying tailored risks to datasets of financial transactions and related records to identify potential anomalies and irregularities for detailed audit testing.

A further description of my responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of my certificate.

In addition, I am required to obtain evidence sufficient to give reasonable assurance that the expenditure and income recorded in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes intended by the Assembly and the financial transactions recorded in the financial statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

Report

In my report on the audit of the 2022-23 financial statements, I drew attention to material levels of irregular income and expenditure. I qualified my regularity audit opinion in relation to:

- expenditure paid to the Northern Ireland Hotel Federation for the delivery of the Co-Operative Marketing Fund;
- income relating to fees charged under the Quality Grading Scheme without the NITB having the necessary legal powers in place to make these charges and expenditure under the Scheme without the necessary related Department of Finance approvals; and
- expenditure relating to the Certification Scheme without the necessary Department of Finance approvals.

Following the identification of the regularity issues, NITB took the decision to pause activities on these schemes. As a result, the level of irregular expenditure incurred across these schemes during 2023-24 was £60,184 and, as this amount is not material in the context of the financial statements as a whole, I have not qualified my regularity audit opinion.

NITB is undertaking a review of costs and potential fees to be charged to meet the objectives relating to full cost recovery on the Quality Grading Scheme and the Certification Scheme. I would urge NITB to

carry out these reviews as soon as possible to minimise the amount of irregular expenditure going forward.

I will continue to keep this area under review in future audits.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Dorinnia Carville". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dorinnia Carville
Comptroller and Auditor General
Northern Ireland Audit Office
106 University Street
BELFAST
BT7 1EU
02 May 2025

NORTHERN IRELAND TOURIST BOARD
trading as
TOURISM NI

SECTION 3 - FINANCIAL ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure for the year ended 31 March 2024

This account summarises the expenditure and income generated and consumed on an accrual's basis. It also includes other comprehensive income and expenditure, which include changes to the values of non-current assets and other financial instruments that cannot yet be recognised as income or expenditure.

		2023-24	2022-23
	Note	£000	£000
Revenue from contracts with customers	6	145	172
Other operating income	6	225	296
Total Operating Income		370	468
Staff Costs	3	(6,958)	(7,916)
Purchase of goods and services	3	(11,095)	(15,326)
Depreciation and Impairment Charges	7&8	(1,416)	(1,713)
Grant Expenditure	4	(1,059)	(2,412)
Other operating expenditure	3	(4,991)	(5,125)
Grants to Tourism Ireland	5	(13,004)	(13,963)
Total Operating Expenditure		(38,523)	(46,455)
Net Operating Expenditure		(38,153)	(45,987)
Finance Income		25	12
Finance Expense		(3)	(278)
Leases & Other Interest		(17)	(23)
Net Expenditure for the year		(38,148)	(46,276)
Items which will not be reclassified to net operating expenditure:			
Net gain / (loss) on revaluation of Property, Plant and Equipment		87	1
Actuarial gain/(loss) on pension scheme	15d	51	11,734
Comprehensive Expenditure for the year		(38,010)	(34,541)

The notes on pages 73 to 96 form part of these accounts.

Statement of Financial Position as at 31 March 2024

This statement presents the financial position of Tourism NI. It comprises three main components: assets owned or controlled; liabilities owed to other bodies; and equity, the remaining value of the entity.

		2023-24	2022-23
	Note	£000	£000
Non-Current Assets			
Property, Plant & Equipment	7	1,384	1,980
Intangible Assets	8	1,124	1,020
Total Non-current Assets		2,508	3,000
Current Assets			
Trade and Other Receivables	10	380	468
Cash and Cash Equivalents	11	4,608	1,553
Total Current Assets		4,988	2,021
Total Assets		7,496	5,021
Current Liabilities			
Trade and Other Payables	12	(9,139)	(8,869)
Total Current Liabilities		(9,139)	(8,869)
Total Assets less Current Liabilities		(1,643)	(3,848)
Non-current Liabilities			
Pension Liabilities	15d	(353)	(381)
Leases	14	(813)	(1,491)
Total Non-current Liabilities	12	(1,166)	(1,872)
Total Assets less Total Liabilities		(2,809)	(5,720)
Taxpayers' Equity and Other Reserves			
General Fund		(2,876)	(5,787)
Revaluation Reserve		67	67
Total Equity		(2,809)	(5,720)

The notes on pages 73 to 96 form part of these accounts.

The financial statements on pages 69 to 72 were approved by the Board on 15 April 2025 and were signed on its behalf by:

Chairman



Date 15 April 2025

Chief Executive



Date 15 April 2025

Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 31 March 2024

The Statement of Cash Flows shows the changes in cash and cash equivalents of Tourism NI during the reporting period. The statement shows how Tourism NI generates and uses cash and cash equivalents by classifying cash flows as operating, investing, and financing activities. The amount of net cash flows arising from operating activities is a key indicator of service costs and the extent to which these operations are funded by way of income from the recipients of services provided by Tourism NI. Investing activities represent the extent to which cash inflows and outflows have been made for resources which are intended to contribute to Tourism NI's future public service delivery.

	Note	2023-24 £000	2022-23 £000
Cash flows from operating activities			
Net expenditure for the year		(38,148)	(46,276)
Adjustments for non-cash transactions			
Amortisation	8	890	1,130
Depreciation	7	528	583
Interest charges		20	301
Non-cash Actuarial Pension Charges		27	1,113
(Increase)/decrease in trade and other receivables	10	88	880
Increase/(decrease) in trade and other payables excluding bank and leases	12	(1,709)	(10,353)
Net cash outflow from operating activities		<u>(38,304)</u>	<u>(52,621)</u>
Cash flows from investing activities			
Property, plant and equipment additions	7	(75)	-
Intangible asset additions	8	(994)	(1,009)
Net cash outflow from investing activities		<u>(1,069)</u>	<u>(1,009)</u>
Cash flows from financing activities			
Grant from sponsoring department - drawn down		40,922	51,642
Lease payments		(480)	(510)
Net financing activities		<u>40,442</u>	<u>51,132</u>
Net increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents in the period		1,069	(2,498)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the period		118	2,616
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the period	11	<u>1,187</u>	<u>118</u>

The notes on pages 73 to 96 form part of these accounts.

Statement of Changes in Taxpayers' Equity for the year ended 31 March 2024

This statement shows the movement in the year on the different reserves held by Tourism NI, analysed into 'general fund reserves' (i.e., those reserves that reflect a contribution from the Consolidated Fund). The Revaluation Reserve reflects the change in asset values that have not been recognised as income or expenditure. The General Fund represents the total assets less liabilities for Tourism NI, to the extent that the total is not represented by other reserves and financing items.

Statement of Changes in Taxpayers' Equity for the year ended 31 March 2024

	Note	General Fund £000	Revaluation Reserve £000	Taxpayers' equity £000
Balance at 31 March 2022		(22,862)	66	(22,796)
Cumulative impact of applying IFRS16		(25)	-	(25)
Grants from Sponsoring Entity		51,642	-	51,642
Gain/(Loss) on revaluation of PPE		-	1	1
Actuarial Gain/(loss)		11,734	-	11,734
Transfers between reserves		-	-	-
Comprehensive Net Expenditure for the year		(46,236)	-	(46,236)
Auditors Remuneration	3	(40)	-	(40)
Balance at 31 March 2023		(5,787)	67	(5,720)
Grants from Sponsoring Entity		40,922	-	40,922
Gain/(Loss) on revaluation of PPE		87	-	87
Actuarial Gain/(loss)	15d	51	-	51
Transfers between reserves		-	-	-
Comprehensive Net Expenditure for the year		(38,111)	-	(38,111)
Payments to Tourism Ireland		-	-	-
Auditors Remuneration	3	(37)	-	(37)
Balance at 31 March 2024		(2,876)	67	(2,809)

The notes on pages 73 to 96 form part of these accounts.

Notes to the Accounts

for the year ended 31 March 2024

1. Statement Of Accounting Policies

Basis of Preparation

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the 2023-24 Government Financial Reporting Manual (FReM) issued by the Department of Finance. The accounting policies contained in the FReM apply International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) as adapted or interpreted for the public sector context. Where the FReM permits a choice of accounting policy, the accounting policy which is judged to be most appropriate to the particular circumstances of Tourism NI for the purpose of giving a true and fair view has been selected. The particular policies adopted by Tourism NI are described below. They have been applied consistently in dealing with the items that are considered material to the accounts.

Accounting Convention

The accounts have been prepared under the historical cost convention modified to account for the revaluation of property, plant and equipment, and intangible assets.

Property, Plant and Equipment, Intangible Assets, Depreciation and Amortisation

- (i) All property, plant and equipment have been valued on net current replacement costs as a proxy guide to fair value.

Indices supplied by the Office for National Statistics are used to calculate the net current replacement cost.

The de minimis level for capitalisation of all categories of Property, Plant and Equipment is £1,000. TNI policy is to “group” assets by category i.e. when the total cost of all individual items purchased together, exceed the de minimis level, they are capitalised.

- (ii) Intangible Assets – Computer licenses for internal recording and reporting systems are capitalised as intangible assets. The de minimis level for capitalisation of an intangible asset is £1,000.

They are amortised over a period of three to five years on a straight-line basis.

- (iii) Depreciation and amortisation are provided on property, plant and equipment and intangible assets at rates calculated to write off the cost of each asset evenly over its expected useful life as follows:

Furniture and Equipment	10 years
Leasehold Fixtures and Fittings	Over the lease term
Computer Equipment/Software	3 to 5 Years
Computer Licences	Over the licence period

- (iv) Tourism NI assesses at each year end date whether there is any objective evidence that a financial asset or group of financial assets classified as available for sale or loans and

receivables is impaired. A full year of depreciation is provided on assets in the year of their purchase unless it is deemed prudent not to do so.

Cash and Cash Equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents comprise cash and demand deposits with commercial banks. As at each reporting date, the carrying value of cash and cash equivalents approximates their fair value due to their short-term nature.

Trade Receivables

Trade receivables are recognised and carried at original invoice amount less an allowance for any uncollectible amounts. Provision is made when there is objective evidence that Tourism NI will not be able to recover balances in full. Balances can only be written off when non-recovery is considered certain and after the appropriate approvals have been granted.

Trade Payables

Trade payables are obligations to pay for goods or services that have been acquired in the ordinary course of business from suppliers. Accounts payable are classified as current liabilities if payment is due within one year or less. If not, they are presented as non-current liabilities.

Prepayments

The de-minimis threshold for any prepayments is set at £500.

Provisions

Tourism NI makes provisions for liabilities and charges where, at the year end date, a legal or constructive liability exists (that is a present obligation from past events exists), where the transfer of economic benefits is probable, and a reasonable estimate can be made.

Contingent Liabilities

In addition to contingent liabilities disclosed in accordance with IAS 37, Tourism NI discloses for Assembly reporting and accountability purposes certain statutory and non-statutory contingent liabilities where the likelihood of a transfer of economic benefit is remote, but which have been reported to the Assembly in accordance with the requirements of Managing Public Money Northern Ireland.

Where the time value of money is material, contingent liabilities which are required to be disclosed under IAS 37 are stated at discounted amounts and the amount reported to the Assembly separately noted. Contingent liabilities that are not required to be disclosed by IAS 37 are stated at the amounts reported to the Assembly.

Accounting Estimates

The use of reasonable estimates is an essential part of the preparation of financial statements and does not undermine their reliability. Changes in accounting estimates result from new information or new developments and, accordingly, are not corrections of errors. The effect of a change in an accounting estimate, shall be recognised by including it in Net Expenditure Account in:

- a) The period of the change, if the change affects that period; or
- b) The period of the change and future periods, if the change affects both.

Leased Assets

IFRS 16 *Leases* replaces IAS 17 *Leases* and is effective with EU adoption from 1 January 2019. In line with the requirements of the FReM, IFRS 16 has been implemented, as interpreted and adapted for the public sector, with effect from 1 April 2022. See note 14 for further details.

Foreign Currencies

Assets and liabilities denominated in foreign currencies have been translated into sterling values at the rate of exchange ruling at the date of the Statement of Financial Position. Transactions in foreign currencies are recorded at the rate ruling at the date of the transaction. All exchange differences are taken to the Net Expenditure Account.

Irrecoverable Value Added Tax

Tourism NI is subject to a very limited recovery of VAT on inputs calculated in accordance with a formula agreed with HM Revenue & Customs. Expenditure is charged in the accounts inclusive of VAT. The VAT recoverable is credited to other operating charges.

Financial Instruments

Financial assets and liabilities are recognised in Tourism NI's Statement of Financial Position when Tourism NI becomes a party to the contractual provision of the instrument.

Financial Assets

Financial assets are classified into the following specified categories: at "fair value through profit or loss" ("FVTPL"); held to maturity investments, "available for sale" ("AFS") financial assets and "loans and receivables". The classification depends on the nature and purpose of the financial assets and is determined at the time of initial recognition. Tourism NI's financial assets comprise Trade and Other Receivables and Cash and Cash Equivalents, and are classified as Loans and Receivables and are held at cost, which approximates to fair value because of their short maturities.

Financial Liabilities

Financial liabilities of Tourism NI, including Trade and Other Payables, are measured at cost which approximates to fair value because of their short maturities.

Financing

The Department for the Economy (DfE) is the parent department of Tourism NI. DfE provides Tourism NI with its Grant-in-Aid during the year to enable Tourism NI to discharge its duties, powers and functions under the agreed operating plan and budget. Grant-in-Aid is credited to Reserves.

Income from Activities

Income from activities represents the invoiced amount of goods sold or services provided (net of VAT) including fees collected from statutory inspection activities and non-statutory star grading of accommodation.

Under the requirements of IFRS 15, Tourism NI has presented separately any income derived from statutory inspections under the heading 'Revenue from contracts with customers', as these fall under the definition of a contract per the standard.

Grant Expenditure

In accordance with a scheme under Article 11 of The Tourism (Northern Ireland) Order 1992, TNI can provide selective financial assistance in the form of grants, loans or investments in tourism-related projects. Grants paid and payable on expenditure incurred in the year by grant recipients are charged to the Net Expenditure account under the heading "Grant Expenditure".

Events

Where Tourism NI has entered into an agreement to support an event, and payment(s) are made prior to the event taking place, the expenditure is recognised in the year of payment.

Pension Costs

Past and present employees in Northern Ireland are covered by the provisions of the Local Government Pension Scheme. In the year 2023-24, Tourism NI contributed 19.0% of Pensionable Pay to the scheme, whilst staff contributed between 5.5% and 10.5% of Pensionable Pay. Further information on the pension scheme can be found at note 15.

For those staff employed in the Republic of Ireland from 1 January 2007, a Trust Based Defined Contribution Scheme has been available for staff to join. The contributions are managed by Zurich Life Assurance Plc and the advisors to the scheme are Towers Watson (Ireland) Limited, trading as Willis Towers Watson. Tourism NI contributed 16% of Salary during the year whilst the staff members will continue to contribute 6%.

Notional Costs

To disclose the full cost of activities, notional costs for the provision of the services received from Internal Audit Services of the Department of Finance (DoF) are included. The 2023-24 notional charge was £48,622 (2022-23: £48,475).

Right of use Assets

Tourism NI recognises a right of use asset and lease liability at the commencement date. The right of use asset is initially measured at cost, which comprises of the initial amount of the lease liability adjusted for initial direct costs, prepayments or incentives and costs related to restoration at the end of the lease. The right of use assets are subsequently measured at either fair value or current value in existing use in line with property, plant and equipment assets. The cost measurement model in IFRS16 is used as an appropriate proxy for current value in existing use or fair value for most leases.

The right of use asset is depreciated over the term of the lease from the commencement date to the earlier of the end of useful life of the right of use asset or the end of the lease term. The estimated useful lives of the right of use assets are determined on the same basis of those of property, plant and equipment assets.

Tourism NI applies IAS 36 Impairment of Assets to determine whether the right of use asset is impaired and to recognise any impairment loss immediately.

Lease Liabilities

The lease liability is initially measured at the present value of the lease payments that are not paid at the commencement date, discounted using the interest rate implicit in the lease, or if that cannot be readily determined, the rate provided by HM Treasury PES Papers (0.95%).

The lease payment is measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method. It is re-measured when there is a change in future lease payments arising from a change in the index or rate, if there is a change in the estimated of the amount expected to be payable under a residual value guarantee or if Tourism NI changes its assessment of whether it will exercise a purchase, extension or termination option.

Lease payments included in the measurement of the lease liability comprise of the following:

- Fixed payments, including in-substance Fixed payments
- variable lease payments that depend on an index rate, initially measured using the index rate as at the commencement date
- amounts expected to be payable under a residual value guarantee
- The exercise price under a purchase option that Tourism NI is reasonably certain to exercise; and
- penalties for early termination of a lease unless Tourism NI is reasonably certain not to terminate early

At the commencement of a lease Tourism NI recognises a right of use asset and lease liability.

2. Statement of Net Expenditure by Operating Segment

2023-24	Gross Expenditure £000	Income £000	Net Expenditure £000
Corporate Services	4,901	-	4,901
Events	2,298	-	2,298
Marketing	10,437	(205)	10,232
Strategic Development	7,903	(165)	7,738
Total	25,539	(370)	25,169

Reconciliation to SoCNE

Interest receivable	-	(25)	(25)
Pension interest (income)/charge	-	-	-
Corporation Tax	-	-	-
Payments to Tourism Ireland	13,004	-	13,004
	38,543	(395)	38,148

2022-23 (Restated)*	Gross Expenditure £000	Income £000	Net Expenditure £000
Finance	7,145	-	7,145
Events	1,469	-	1,469
Marketing	12,861	(251)	12,610
Strategic Development	11,319	(218)	11,101
TOTAL	32,794	(469)	32,325

Reconciliation to SoCNE

Interest receivable	-	(12)	(12)
Pension interest (income)/charge	-	-	-
Corporation Tax	-	-	-
Payments to Tourism Ireland	13,963	-	13,963
	46,757	(481)	46,276

*In 2023-24 period the operating segments were changed to better reflect the breakdown of the organisational structure. 2022-23 has been restated to reflect the new organisational structure.

Corporate Services comprises of the following units – Financial Accounting, Management Accounting, People & Organisational Development, Strategy & Policy, Procurement and Computer Services. The Director of the division reports to the Chief Executive.

Events comprises of the following units – Major Events and Events Development. The Director of the division reports to the Chief Executive.

Marketing comprises of the following units – Destination PR, ROI Market, Golf Marketing, Social and Digital, Business Solutions and Visitor Information. The Director of the division reports to the Chief Executive.

Strategic Development comprises of the following units – Experience & Industry Development, Regions & Investments, City & Growth Deals and Quality Assurance & Certification. The Director of the division reports to the Chief Executive.

3. Expenditure

	2023-24	2022-23
Staff Costs	£000	£000
Wages and Salaries	5,246	5,368
Social Security Costs	642	506
Other Pension Costs	1,085	2,118
Recoveries in Respect of Outward Secondments	(15)	(76)
Total Staff Costs¹	6,958	7,916
Purchase of Goods and Services		
Marketing, Advertising and Promotions	8,516	11,307
Industry support and development	1,498	2,329
Premises Cost	35	44
Printing and Stationery	43	45
Legal Fees	15	25
Professional Fees	101	339
Catering and General Office Expenses	318	425
Staff Development (Training and Recruitment)	106	125
Publications	51	142
Press and Public Relations	206	364
Hospitality	21	17
Property Rates	185	164
<u>Non-cash items</u>		
Notional Charges	49	48
Reversal of Notional Charges	(49)	(48)
Total Purchase of Goods and Services	11,095	15,326
Other Operating Expenditure		
Events	2,617	2,511
Licensing and Information Services	2,059	2,268
Travel and Subsistence – Board Members	4	6
Travel and Subsistence – Other Employees	106	121
Gain/(Loss) on Exchange Rate	16	16
Auditor's Remuneration and Expenses	37	40
Support for Grant Expenditure	152	170
	4,991	5,132
<u>Non-cash Items</u>		
Depreciation	1,416	1,713
Bad Debts Written Off	(1)	(7)
Total Other Operating Expenditure	6,403	6,838

¹ Further analysis of staff costs is located in the Staff report on page 56.

Auditor's Remuneration – Non-Audit Services

The external audit fee included in Other Operating Expenditure totalled £37,000 in 2023-24 (2022-23: £40,000). During the year, there were no payments made to the Northern Ireland Audit Office in relation to non-audit services (2022-23: £1,319) these are disclosed as expenditure under professional fees.

4. Grant Expenditure

	2023-24 £000	2022-23 £000
Revenue Funding Programme	1,059	2,412
Total	1,059	2,412

The two individual programmes supported as part of the Capital Funding Programme in 2023-24 were the Website Development Programme and the Derry-Londonderry on the North Atlantic Capital Project.

5. Grants

Grant from the Department for the Economy

In 2023-24, Tourism NI as a Non-Departmental Public Body credited the Grants and Grant-in-Aid for revenue purposes as contributions from controlling parties as giving rise to a financial interest in the residual interest of Tourism NI and hence has accounted for them as financing. As a result of this treatment, the General Reserve has been credited and not the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure.

During the year, Tourism NI received grants from DfE, on behalf of Tourism Ireland Limited to the value of £13.0 million (2022-23: £13.9 million). The total of this grant was paid to Tourism Ireland Limited in its entirety.

6. Income

6.1 Revenue from Contracts with Customers

	2023-24 £000	2022-23 £000
Statutory Certification fees	145	172
Total	145	172

6.2 Other Operating Income

	2023-24 £000	2022-23 £000
Grading	21	46
Other Income	204	250
Total	225	296
Total Other Income	370	468

7. Property, Plant and Equipment

	Leasehold Improvements £000	Right of use Buildings £000	Furniture & Equipment £000	Computer s £000	Total £000
Cost or Valuation					
At 1 April 2023	643	2,835	26	1,046	4,550
Additions	-	-	-	75	75
Revaluation	-	(223)	-	-	(223)
Disposals	-	-	-	(262)	(262)
Transfers	-	-	-	-	-
Indexation	-	-	-	-	-
At 31 March 2024	643	2,612	26	859	4,140
Depreciation					
At 1 April 2023	643	889	25	1,011	2,568
Provision for year	-	467	1	60	528
Revaluation	-	(78)	-	-	(78)
Disposal	-	-	-	(262)	(262)
Transfer	-	-	-	-	-
Indexation	-	-	-	-	-
At 31 March 2024	643	1,278	26	809	2,756
Net book value					
At 31 March 2024	-	1,334	-	50	1,384
Net Book Value					
At 31 March 2023	-	1,945	1	34	1,980
Asset Financing					
Owned				50	50
Finance Leased		1,334			1,334
Carrying amount at 31 March 2024		1,334		50	1,384

2022-23	Leasehold Improvements	Buildings	Furniture & Equipment	Computers	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Cost or Valuation					
At 1 April 2022	643	2,835	26	1,034	4,537
Additions at Cost / Valuation	-	-	-	-	-
Indexation	-	-	-	12	12
At 31 March 2023	643	2,835	26	1,046	4,549
Depreciation					
At 1 April 2022	643	401	21	911	1,975
Charge for Period	-	488	4	90	583
Indexation	-	-	-	11	11
At 31 March 2023	643	889	25	1,012	2,569
Net Book Value					
At 31 March 2023	-	1,945	1	34	1,980
At 31 March 2022	-	2,434	5	124	2,563
Asset Financing					
Owned	-	-	-	34	34
Finance Leased	-	1,945	1	-	1,946
Carrying amount at 31 March 2023	-	1,945	1	34	1,980

8. Intangible Fixed Assets

2023-24

	Software Licenses	Digital Data	Total
	£000	£000	£000
Cost or Valuation			
At 1 April 2023	1,164	4,221	5,385
Additions	-	993	993
Disposals	-	(1,043)	(1,043)
At 31 March 2024	1,164	4,171	5,335
Amortisation			
At 1 April 2023	1,164	3,201	4,365
Charge for Period	-	890	890
Disposals	-	(1,043)	(1,043)
At 31 March 2024	1,164	3,048	4,212
NBV at 31 March 2024	-	1,124	1,124
NBV at 31 March 2023	-	1,020	1,020

2022-23

	Software Licenses	Digital Data	Total
	£000	£000	£000
Cost or Valuation			
At 1 April 2022	1,164	3,212	4,376
Additions	-	1,009	1,009
At 31 March 2023	1,164	4,221	5,385
Amortisation			
At 1 April 2022	1,164	2,071	3,235
Charge for Period	-	1,130	1,130
At 31 March 2023	1,164	3,201	4,365
NBV at 31 March 2023	-	1,020	1,020
NBV at 31 March 2022	-	1,142	1,142

Note all Tourism NI Intangible assets are owned.

9. Financial Instruments

As the cash requirements of Tourism NI are met through Grant-In-Aid provided by DfE, financial instruments play a more limited role in creating and managing risk than would apply to a non-public sector body. The majority of financial instruments relate to contracts to buy non-financial items in line with Tourism NI's expected purchase and usage requirements and Tourism NI is therefore exposed to little credit, liquidity or market risk.

10. Trade and Other Receivables

	2023-24 £000	2022-23 £000
<i>Amounts falling due within one year:</i>		
Trade Receivables	131	209
Prepayments and Accrued Income	235	242
Other receivables	14	17
Total	380	468

11. Cash and Cash Equivalents

	2023-24 £000	2022-23 £000
Balance at 1 April 2023	118	2,616
Net Change in Cash and Cash Equivalent Balances	1,069	(2,498)
Balance at 31 March 2024	1,187	118
The following balances at 31 March 2024 were held at:		
Commercial Banks and Cash in Hand	1,187	118
Balance at 31 March 2024	1,187	118

Balances for Cash and Cash equivalents are disclosed in the Statement of Financial Position as follows:

	Note	2023-24 £000	2022-23 £000
Current Assets		4,608	1,553
Current Liabilities	12	(3,421)	(1,435)
Total		1,187	118

12. Trade and Other Payables

	Note	2023-24 £000	2022-23 £000
<i>Amounts falling due within one year:</i>			
Bank	11	3,421	1,435
Accruals		5,094	5,990
Trade Payables		11	617
Deferred Income		8	10
VAT Payable		147	330
Corporation Tax		5	-
Current part of lease liabilities	14.1	453	487
Total		9,139	8,869
<i>Amounts falling due after more than one year:</i>			
Leases	14.1	813	1,491
Pension	15	353	381
Total		1,166	1,872

13. Provisions for Liabilities and Charges

Tourism NI had no provisions as at 31 March 2024 (2023: £Nil).

14. Leases

IFRS 16 Leases replaces IAS 17 Leases and is effective with EU adoption from 1 January 2019. In line with the requirements of the FReM, IFRS 16 has been implemented, as interpreted and adapted for the public sector, with effect from 1 April 2022.

Tourism NI have two lease agreements:

- Tourism NI head office rent (including parking).
- Tourism NI ROI office rent. This lease includes a break clause on 03/10/2026 and a rent review on 03/10/2024 that will increase the lease by 3%. The rent review has been factored in when calculating the Net Present Value.

Quantitative disclosures around right-of-use assets:

2023-24

	Note	Buildings £000	Equipment £000	Total £000
Right-of-use assets				
NBV as at 1 April 2023		1,945	-	1,945
Revaluation increase/(decrease)		(223)	-	(223)
Depreciation Expense		(467)	-	(467)
Depreciation on revaluation		78	-	78
As 31 March 2024	7	1,333	-	1,333

2022-23

	Note	Buildings £000	Equipment £000	Total £000
Right-of-use assets				
As at 1 April 2022		2,433	1	2,434
Depreciation Expense		(488)	(1)	(489)
As 31 March 2023	7	1,945	-	1,945

14.1 Lease Liability

Quantitative disclosures around lease liabilities

	2023-24 £000	2022-23 £000
Buildings		
Not later than one year (<i>including interest</i>)	465	506
Later than one year and not later than five years	804	1,395
Later than five years	22	126
Less interest element	(25)	(51)
Present Value of obligations	1,266	1,976

		2023-24	2022-23
Other		£000	£000
Not later than one year		-	1
Later than one year and not later than five years		-	
Later than five years		-	-
Less interest element		-	-
Present Value of obligations		-	1
Total Present Value of obligations		1,266	1,977
Current Portion (<i>excluding interest</i>)	12	453	487
Non-current Portion	12	813	1,490
Total		1,266	1,977

Quantitative disclosures around elements in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure

There are no lease payments included in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure.

14.2 Lease Cashflows

Quantitative disclosures around cash outflow for leases

	2023-24	2022-23
	£'000	£'000
Total cash outflow for lease	496	510
Total	496	510

15. Pension Commitments

a) Local Government Pension Scheme

The Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) Northern Ireland is a funded defined benefit pension scheme, which provides retirement benefits for employees on a career average revalued earnings basis from 1 April 2015. Prior to that date benefits were built up on a “final salary” basis.

From 1 April 2015, a member builds up retirement pension at the rate of 1/49th pensionable pay for each year. Pension benefits in relation to membership between 1 April 2009 and 31 March 2015 were built up at the rate of 1/60th pensionable pay for each year of membership. There’s no automatic lump sum provided in respect of membership after 31 March 2009. Pension benefits in relation to any membership before 1 April 2009 were built up at the rate of 1/80th (pension) and 3/80^{ths} (tax-free lump sum) of pensionable pay for each year of membership up to 31 March 2009. At retirement, members may give up some pension for additional lump sum subject to HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) limits.

As part of a general review of public sector pension schemes from 1 April 2009, the Government has introduced changes to the contribution rates. Instead of most people paying a standard contribution rate of 6% of their pensionable pay, there are now different contribution rates for different pay bands. The scheme’s professionally qualified actuaries recommended the rates for administrative employees between 5.5% and 10.5% of pensionable pay. Rates can be seen in the Remuneration Report.

Under IAS 19 Tourism NI is required to account for their share of assets and liabilities in the scheme. Added years’ discretionary benefits awarded to former employees who retired early are also accounted for as a defined benefit scheme, as in accordance with IAS 19. This liability also represents the actuarial liability of future costs to LGPS in respect of past employees who retired early. Given projected lifespans this liability will be payable over a number of years.

The latest formal actuarial valuation of the fund was carried out as at 31 March 2022. In calculating the Tourism NI’s assets and liabilities the fund’s actuaries have rolled forward and updated the values calculated at the latest valuation (March 2022). The fund’s actuaries had to make a number of assumptions about events and circumstances in the future meaning that the results of actuarial calculations are subject to uncertainties within a range of possible values.

The balance sheet is showing a net pensions asset before consideration of a surplus restriction. The surplus has been restricted and not recognised in the balance sheet.

b) Actuarial Assumptions

The following actuarial assumptions were accepted on the recommendation of the actuary:

As at 31 March actuarial assumptions used	March 2024	March 2023	March 2022	March 2021	March 2020	March 2019	March 2018	March 2017
Rate of Increase in Pensions	2.6%	2.7%	3.0%	2.7%	2.0%	2.2%	2.1%	2.0%
Rate of Increase in Salaries	4.1%	4.2%	4.5%	4.2%	3.5%	3.7%	3.6%	3.5%
Discount Rate	4.8%	4.7%	2.7%	2.1%	2.3%	2.4%	2.6%	2.6%
CPI Inflation	2.6%	2.7%	3.0%	2.7%	2.0%	2.2%	2.1%	2.0%

Mortality assumptions

Actuarial Assumptions for Average Future Life Expectancy	Males March 2024	Males March 2023	Males March 2022	Males March 2021	Females March 2024	Females March 2023	Females March 2022	Females March 2021
Member aged 65 at accounting date	21.7 years	22.2 years	21.8 years	21.9 years	24.6 years	25.0 years	25.0 years	25.1 years
Member aged 45 at accounting date	22.7 years	23.2 years	23.2 years	23.3 years	25.6 years	26.0 years	26.4 years	26.5 years

Sensitivity Analysis

IAS 19 valuation results depend critically on the principal assumptions used in the calculations. The discount rate used to value the liabilities is prescribed under IAS 19 and the results are particularly sensitive to the discount rate. A reduction in the net discount rate will increase the liabilities as a higher value is placed on benefits in the future.

Regarding mortality assumptions, if longevity improves at a faster rate than allowed for in the assumptions then, a higher value would be placed on the employer's liabilities. Further increases in pensionable pay, inflation and hence pension, more than allowed for in the assumptions, will increase the value of the liabilities.

The approximate impact of changing the key assumptions on the present value of the funded defined benefit obligation as at 31 March 2024 and the projected service cost for the year ended 31 March 2024 is set out below.

Funded LGPS benefits

Discount rate assumption 31 March 2024

Adjustment to discount rate	+0.1% p.a.	Base figure	-0.1% p.a.
Present value of total obligation (£M's)	34.686	35.322	35.993
% change in present value of total obligation	-1.8%		1.9%
Projected service cost (£M's)	0.892	0.930	0.969
Approximate % change in projected service cost	-4.1%		4.2%

Rate of general increase in salaries

Adjustment to salary increase rate	+0.1% p.a.	Base figure	-0.1% p.a.
Present value of total obligation (£M's)	35.393	35.322	35.251
% change in present value of total obligation	0.2%		-0.2%
Projected service cost (£M's)	0.930	0.930	0.930
Approximate % change in projected service cost	0.0%		0.0%

Rate of increase to pensions and rate of revaluation of pension accounts

Adjustment to pension increase rate	+0.1% p.a.	Base figure	-0.1% p.a.
Present value of total obligation (£M's)	35.887	35.322	34.757
% change in present value of total obligation	1.6%		-1.6%
Projected service cost (£M's)	0.969	0.930	0.892
Approximate % change in projected service cost	4.2%		-4.1%

Post retirement mortality assumption

Adjustment to mortality age rating assumption*	-1 year	Base figure	+1 year
Present value of total obligation (£M's)	36.240	35.322	34.404
% change in present value of total obligation	2.6%		-2.6%
Projected service cost (£M's)	0.963	0.930	0.896
Approximate % change in projected service cost	3.6%		-3.7%

A rating of +1 year means that members are assumed to follow the mortality pattern of the base table for an individual that is 1 year older than them.

c) Asset Valuations

The fair value of the assets held by the pension scheme attributable to the Tourism NI are analysed as follows:

Assets	Assets at 31 March 2024 %	Assets at 31 March 2023 %
Equities	43.7	40.0
Property	9.7	11.2
Government Bonds	17.4	20.6
Corporate Bonds	4.2	3.0
Multi Asset Credit	13.3	13.3
Cash	5.6	6.5
Other *	6.1	5.4
Total	100.0	100.0

Employers who report under IAS 19 are no longer required to recognise an expected return on assets therefore assumptions are no longer disclosed.

* Other may include hedge funds, currency holdings, asset allocation futures and other financial instruments.

Statement of Financial Position

The following amounts at 31 March 2024, 2023, 2022, 2021, 2020, and 2019 were measured in accordance with the requirements of IAS 19:

	March 2024 £'000	March 2023 £'000	March 2022 £'000	March 2021 £'000	March 2020 £'000	March 2019 £'000
Fair Value of Scheme Assets	39,428	35,576	39,941	37,098	30,352	32,588
Present Value of Defined Benefit Obligations	(39,781)	(35,957)	(50,665)	(52,350)	(40,848)	(40,888)
Net Pension Asset / (Liability)	(353)	(381)	(10,724)	(15,252)	(10,496)	(8,300)

A higher than expected return on plan assets, alongside a change to the actuarial assumptions over the period has resulted in a more positive balance sheet position than if the financial assumptions at the start of the period had of been used.

As at 31 March 2024, the funded pension benefits reported a surplus position of £4,106k however as per IAS19 this has been restricted to NIL. A liability of £353k has been recognised for the unfunded benefits.

d) Amounts Charged to Expenditure

	2023-24 £000	2022-23 £000
Analysis of amount charged to net expenditure statement in respect of defined benefit scheme:		
Current Service Cost	(980)	(2,013)
Curtailments and Settlements	-	-
Past Service Cost	-	-
Employer Contributions	907	859
Contributions in Respect of Unfunded Benefits	46	41
	<u>(27)</u>	<u>(1,113)</u>
Analysis of amounts charged to other finance costs:		
Interest on Net Defined Benefit Liability/(Asset) (Funded)	21	(266)
Interest on Net Defined Benefit Liability/(Asset) (Unfunded)	(17)	(12)
	<u>4</u>	<u>(278)</u>
Analysis of amounts in the statement of taxpayers' equity:		
Actuarial Gains/(Losses) (Funded)	52	11,694
Actuarial Gains/(Losses) (Unfunded)	-1	40
	<u>51</u>	<u>11,734</u>
Movement in deficit during the year		
Deficit in Scheme at the Beginning of the Year	(381)	(10,724)
Movement in the year:		
Current Service Cost	(980)	(2,013)
Employer Contributions	907	859
Contributions in Respect of Unfunded Benefits	46	41
Past Service Cost	-	-
Financing Costs	4	(278)
Actuarial Gain/(Losses)	51	11,734
Deficit in Scheme at the end of the Year	<u>(353)</u>	<u>(381)</u>

e) Employer's Contribution Rates

The liabilities show the underlying commitment that Tourism NI has in the long term to pay retirement benefits. The total pension liability is £39.1 million (2022-23: £35.2 million) and results in a net overall liability balance of £0.35 million (2022-23: deficit of £0.38 million) which is recorded on the Statement of Financial Position.

For 2023-24, the contribution rate for employers participating was 19.0% (2022-23: 19.5%).

f) Scheme Gains and Losses

Actuarial gains and losses represent the extent to which actual outcomes have differed from the assumptions which were used in calculating IAS 19 figures.

For assets the gain/loss is normally the difference between the actual and expected return on assets, and for liabilities the gain/loss normally arises from the change in financial assumptions. These actuarial gains/losses are shown in the table below as experience gains and losses.

	31 March 2024 £'000	31 March 2023 £'000	31 March 2022 £'000	31 March 2021 £'000	31 March 2020 £'000	31 March 2019 £'000
Actuarial Gain (loss) on Assets	463	14,375	6,185	6,000	(3,125)	1,393
Actuarial Gain (loss) on obligation / liability	(412)	(2,641)	(104)	(9,200)	1,744	(752)
Net Actuarial Gain (loss) Charged to Statement of Taxpayers Equity	51	11,734	6,081	(3,200)	(1,381)	641

Fair Value of Scheme Assets	39,428	35,576	39,941	37,098	30,352	32,588
Present Value of Defined Benefit Obligations	(39,781)	(35,957)	(50,665)	(51,637)	(40,848)	(40,888)
Net Pension Liability	(353)	(381)	(10,724)	(14,539)	(10,496)	(8,300)

g) Republic of Ireland Employees

For those staff employed in the Republic of Ireland from 1 January 2007, a Trust Based Defined Contribution Scheme has been available for staff to join. The contributions are managed by Zurich Life Assurance Plc and the advisers to the scheme are Towers Watson (Ireland) Limited, trading as Willis Towers Watson. Tourism NI contributed 16% of salary during the year whilst the staff member will continue to contribute 6%.

The total contributions payable to Zurich Life Assurance Plc by Tourism NI for 2023-24 was £65,678 during the financial year there was a back payment of £21,798 (2022-23: £43,880).

16. Capital Commitments

Tourism NI had no capital commitments as at 31 March 2024 (2023: £Nil).

17. Other Financial Commitments

Tourism NI enters into non-cancellable contracts to provide financial assistance under the Tourism Development Scheme. At 31 March 2024 the amount outstanding in respect of these schemes was £Nil.

	2023-24 £000	2022-23 £000
Not later than one year	-	1,307
Later than one year and not later than five years	-	-
Later than five years	-	-
Present Value of Obligations	-	1,307

18. Contingent Liabilities

Pension liability - Goodwin judgement

As detailed in Note 15, TNI has recognised a Pension liability of £0.353m (2023: liability of £0.381m) for the NILGOSC defined benefit scheme. In June 2020, an Employment Tribunal ruled, that the Teachers' Pension Regulations 2010 (as amended) directly discriminated on grounds of sexual orientation in relation to the provision of adult survivor pensions and thereby result in a breach of the non-discrimination rule in section 61(1) to the Equality Act 2010. The provisions found that survivor's benefits of a female member in an opposite sex marriage are less favourable than for a female in a same sex marriage or civil partnership, and that treatment amounts to direct discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation. Although there is a similar differential treatment under the regulations governing the LGPS(NI), it is more limited in scope. The differential applies only where the marriage or civil partnership is entered into after the member has left the scheme (either as a pensioner or becoming a deferred member). As a result, any future remedy, regardless of its retrospective scope, is therefore considered likely to be immaterial. The actuary for the scheme currently estimates the Goodwin judgement could add around 0.2% to the defined benefit obligation for a typical employer (and no higher than 0.5%), however the impact will vary depending on the membership profile. TNI's defined benefit obligation disclosed in Note 15c at 31 March 2024 is £39,781 million (2023: £35,957 million).

Tourism NI has not entered into any guarantees or indemnities or provided any letters of comfort at 31 March 2024 or at 31 March 2023.

19. Related Party Transactions

Tourism NI is a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) sponsored by the Department for the Economy (DfE). DfE and the other bodies it sponsors are regarded as related parties. In addition, Tourism NI has had a small number of transactions with other Government departments and other central Government bodies.

Tourism NI works with many public and private sector organisations including companies in which Board and SMT Members of Tourism NI have a beneficial interest. Transactions during the year with such companies, which were conducted at arm's length and were subject to normal project and programme rules and tendering procedures, where appropriate, are listed below:

John McGrillen - Chief Executive

Board Member of Tourism Ireland – grant paid: £13.0 million (2022-23: £13.9 million) services paid: £543,304 (2022-23: £370,626).

David Roberts - Director of Strategic Development

Board Member of Arts and Business NI Ltd – spend in year £Nil (2022-23: £648).

Dot Erskine - Director of Strategy and Policy

Spouse is Operations Director of Mammoth - spend in year £2,675,828 (2022-23: £2,911,059).

Anne Marie Donnelly - Head of Management Accounts

Spouse is Managing Director of Hallmark Solutions – spend in year £23,820 (2022-23: £9,840).

Ellvena Graham - Chairperson

Member of the NI Chamber of Commerce & Industry – spend in year £Nil (2022-23: £10,860).

John West - Board Member

Independent Board Member and Audit Committee Chair with Department for Communities – spend in year £Nil (2022-23: £345).

Michael Counahan - Board Member

Director of the Association of Visitor Experiences & Attractions - spend in year £4,000 and (2022-23: £Nil)

Colin Johnston - Board member

Director of the following companies; Galgorm Hotel & Spa Resort – spend in year £46,448 (2022-23: £34,665), Northern Ireland Hotel Federation spend in year - £141,968, (2022-23: £875,101) and Fratelli Belfast Limited – spend in year £940, (2022-23: £443).

John Hood - Board member

Director with Invest NI - spend in year £91,235 (2022-23: £107,289)

Date of Authorisation for Issue

The Accounting Officer authorised the issue of these financial statements on 02 May 2025.