

NATIONAL ADULT LITERACY AGENCY (NALA)

(the “Company”)

Minutes of the 44th Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Company held at the National College of Ireland, Mayor Square, Dublin 1 on the 21st day of May 2025 at 2.00pm in Room 2.19 of the National College of Ireland, Mayor Square. Dublin 1.

Attendees

Officers and Directors: Margaret Kelly (Chairperson), Maria O’Gorman (Vice Chairperson), Aoife Foley (Honorary Secretary) and Board members: Trish Nolan, Tom O’Mara, Dr Eleanor Neff, Elma Teahan and Paula Tiller.

NALA Officials in attendance: Colleen Dube, (Chief Executive Officer) , Caitriona Whelan (Acting Communications, Outreach and Advocacy Manager), Jonah Mudehwe (Finance and Corporate Services Manager), Michelle Reade (Governance and Compliance Officer), Caroline Hollick-Ward (Membership and Funding Development Officer), Elaine Mullen (Office Manager), Gillian Harris (eLearning Development Co-ordinator), Margaret Murray (Literacy Student and Development Officer), Suzanne O’Beirne (HR and Plain English Administrator), Donald Piccione (Digital Marketing Officer).

Other Officials in attendance: Aedín Morkan, Audit Director, Forvis Mazars

In person: 20 other voting members and 1 other non-voting attendee.

By Proxy: 8 individual members voted by proxy.

The required quorum was reached.

Commencement

The event commenced at 2.00 pm when Colleen Dube, NALA's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) welcomed attendees. She introduced the NALA staff that were present and available to provide help. She informed the attendees that there was a photographer at the event and to let NALA staff know if they did not want to be photographed.

Colleen introduced the Chairperson, Margaret Kelly, who gave an overview of the agenda and items for decision. Margaret spoke of the circular economy, the fact that the National College of Ireland (NCI) was originally set up in Sandford Lodge in Ranelagh and moved to the Docklands in 2002. In turn NALA was housed in Gardiner Street and subsequently moved to Sandford Lodge in Ranelagh and was now using the NCI campus to host the AGM. She thanked NALA staff for their organisation of the AGM. Margaret advised that it is an obligation on all boards to have an AGM every year to report on activities, to present the accounts, to identify any changes to the Constitution governing how they operate, and to seek approval for the appointment of auditors and for the Board to agree their fees. The AGM also elects new members to the Board. In this case, NALA had only one candidate per vacancy, so there would be no election. She explained that the candidates would introduce themselves and say a bit about their backgrounds later, before the attendees would be asked to approve their appointment.

There are no changes proposed to the Constitution, so the AGM will only have to deal with the usual business. Margaret mentioned the recent media controversies in relation to other boards and reassured all that the Board take their responsibilities very seriously and have a wide list of action points we take to make sure we comply with the requirements of the Charities Regulator.

The Board and its sub committees are responsible for approving NALA policies and procedures, including financial procedures, and ensuring compliance with human resources, health and safety policies, equality and employment law, risk management and tax law. The Board is also responsible for giving strategic direction to the work of NALA, ensuring we get value for money, and that we evaluate what we do.

At each board meeting the Board reviews the accounts, the progress in implementing

NALA's strategic plan, hears an update from our various sub committees, reviews our policies on a rolling basis, and discusses issues of concern. We are very conscious that we get public money and must put it to best possible use to advance adult literacy in Ireland. Our AGMs are an important part of the accountability system, to make sure our members know what we do and where the money goes.

Formal Proceedings

Margaret then called the AGM to order and advised that we have enough members (20) (a quorum) present, either in person or by having sent in a proxy form to let us go ahead with our 44th AGM. She provided an overview of the agenda for the AGM and explained that questions would be taken after each agenda item. She explained that Members of NALA who are eligible to vote have been given a card to hold in the air when asked to vote. Anyone can ask questions.

Minutes of the 2024 Annual General Meeting (28 May 2024)

Margaret handed over to Aoife Foley, NALA's Company Secretary, to provide a summary of the Minutes of the 2024 AGM, held on date 28th May 2024, in the Richmond Education and Events Centre in Dublin 7.

Aoife advised that she would give a quick review of the minutes from the 2024 AGM. She noted that the full minutes were circulated and are available on NALA's website.

Margaret asked the attendees to show their approval to adopt the minutes of the 2024 AGM by holding up their voting cards.

The 28th of May 2024 AGM minutes were approved.

Aoife then introduced Elma Teahan, Chair of the Audit, Risk and Finance Subcommittee, and Aedín Morkan, Audit Director from Forvis Mazars, to give an overview of the 2024 Directors' Report and Financial Statements. She advised that the Directors' Report and Financial Statements were circulated, are available on NALA's website and are also included in our Annual Report.

Directors' Report and Financial Statements 2024

Elma Teahan, Chair of the Audit, Risk and Finance Subcommittee, again introduced Aedin Morkan, Audit Director from Forvis Mazars, who gave an overview of the 2024 Directors' Report and Financial Statements.

Aedín provided a commentary on the audit of the 2024 Financial Statements.

She noted the following in her summary of the Financial Statements:

- NALA's Financial Statements were prepared using Financial Reporting Standard (FRS) 102, Charity Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) and the Companies Act 2014 and are fully compliant with those standards.
- The Financial Statements are prepared on a going concern basis which means that NALA's management and Directors and auditors, Forvis Mazars, have considered the ability of NALA to operate for a period of 12 months following the date of approval of the financial statements and have concluded that there is no significant uncertainty regarding their being able to operate.
- Forvis Mazars conducted a full scope statutory audit of the financial statements in line with international standards and have issued a full clean unmodified unqualified audit report.
- The Statement of Financial Activities showed:
 - Income of €2,725,860 generated in 2024;
 - Expenditure of €2,639,521 incurred in 2024; and a surplus for 2023 of €72,776 and accumulated funds of €1,029,006.
- The Balance sheet shows the restricted funds balance of €73,775. This means that these funds can only be spent on specific work. The unrestricted funds of €1,041,570 can be spent on any projects to advance NALA's charitable objectives. The Cash flow statement shows an increase of €90,200 in the cash balance from €1,116,170 at the end of 2023 to €1,206,370 at the end of 2024.

This concluded Aedín's commentary on the Financial Statements.

There were no questions.

Reappointment of Forvis Mazars as Auditors

- Margaret asked the members to show approval for the reappointment of Forvis Mazars as Statutory Auditors for the next 3 years by holding up voting cards.
- The resolution was approved.
- Members were also asked to show approval to authorise the directors to approve the remuneration of the statutory auditor.
- The resolution was approved.

Review of Company Affairs 2024

- Colleen Dube, NALA CEO, gave an overview of the Company Affairs for 2024:
 - NALA had 1,724 members in 2024 including students, people working in education, small and large organisations and interested members of the public.
 - This included individual members such as adult literacy students, tutors, people working in education and members of the public who are interested in literacy and numeracy
 - Organisation members from adult literacy centres, Youthreach centres, schools and community training centres, prisons, probation or Garda projects and so on
 - Larger organisation members such as Education and Training Boards (ETB's), county libraries, non-governmental organisations, education-related national organisations and organisations that are engaged through the plain English services and literacy awareness training.
- Colleen then gave an overview of "Our year and our work in 2024" which was broken down into four themes identified in the Strategic Plan.

1. Advocate

- 7,000 people consulted for Strategic Plan
- 60+ email campaigns to members and other stakeholders including learners, tutors, Learn with NALA centres and community and voluntary groups
- Communications plan resulting in 1,286 new social media followers, 204,430 website visitors, 122 media mentions
- 3 research publications: 1 working paper, 1 journal article and Learning with NALA report
- 15 presentations and study visits
- 3 election manifestos, 2 policy briefings and 12 policy submissions

2. Empower

Literacy learners and students

- 401 students at 6 student events and 2 Learn with NALA awards ceremonies
- 1,325 Freephone calls resulting in 998 information packs, 594 ETB referrals; 72 direct referrals
- 251 learners had 1,798 phone sessions with our phone Tutoring Service
- 4,681 NALA certificates of achievement
- 3,983 adults took part in online learning on Learn with NALA
- 2,904 learners were supported to achieve Quality and Qualification Ireland (QQI) awards
Tutors
- 688 adult education professionals took part in 20 events (3 conferences and 17 webinars)
- 46,475 learning resources were distributed to over 600 organisations
- 4 new English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) booklets were piloted
- 660 participants enrolled on NALA's 5 professional development programmes; 489 certificates of achievement issued

3. Enable

Literacy awareness and outreach

- 893 participants attended 11 events
- 8 online literacy awareness events attended by 260 community and voluntary staff
- 4 Literacy Ambassador Programmes in Castlerea, Wheatfield, Mountjoy and Midlands prisons that resulted in 12 visits, 65 attendees (57 learners and 8 teachers) and 57 NALA certificates of completion being awarded.

Plain English editing and training

- 155 documents edited in plain English for 59 clients
- 2,512 people attended 49 customised plain English training programmes, 5 online training sessions and 4 webinars
- 20 community of practice monthly sessions for 38 public sector staff
- 10,500 copies of updated Writing and Design Tips distributed

4. Evolve

Governance and human resources

- 2024 – 2030 Strategic Plan including new values of Potential, Respect, Inclusion, Collaboration and Equity launched
- Constitution and membership revised and implemented
- Updated subcommittee terms of reference and Staff handbook
- 4 staff recruitment campaigns including a new Membership and Funding Development Officer

Margaret thanked Colleen and noted that we have had an active year, finishing and launching a new Strategic Plan, lobbying Government on policy, hosting events for learners and tutors, providing professional development, literacy tuition over the phone, the Learn with NALA literacy Tutoring Service and eLearning website, promoting literacy friendly services in various organisations offering services to the public, and promoting plain English.

In addition, the Literacy Ambassador programme in the prison service was expanded and is being further expanded in 2025. With static funding, apart from new initiatives funded by SOLAS (Ireland's Further Education and Training Authority) such as the Literacy Ambassador programme, 2024 was a year of consolidation for NALA, and the organisation is finding it increasingly difficult to maintain its current scale of service. Margaret then invited Michelle Reade, NALA's Governance and Compliance Officer, to address the appointment of new Directors to the Board of NALA.

Michelle started by thanking the Board, four sub committees and two working groups for all their work in keeping pace with the statutory and governance requirements which are necessary for the organisation. Michelle noted that all the members of those committees and our Board give their time on a purely voluntary basis. Another thank you went to all of NALA's ambassadors and students and learners who gave their time and help to support NALA.

- Michelle provided updates on Board membership and proposed changes.
 - NALA's constitution allows for 16 Directors
 - 11 Directors elected by the Members
 - 3 Officers elected by the Members

- 2 Directors co-opted / selected by the Directors to fill specific skills on the Board
- She advised that since the 2024 AGM there were no co-opted Directors appointed to the Board.
- There are no Directors leaving the Board this year. Two resignations were made; Christopher Potts and Tadgh Quill-Manley unfortunately had to step down in 2024. They were both thanked for their contributions to the work of NALA.
- Michelle noted that there will be no election as we have one candidate for each vacancy.
- Michelle welcomed each of the proposed candidates and asked them to say something about their background and why they want to be on the board.

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Candidate	Position	Proposed by	Seconded by
Geraldine Mernagh	Director	Dr Eleanor Neff	Paula Tiller
Sarah Shaughnessy	Director	Catherine Devlin	Thomas Campbell

Both appointments were approved by holding up voting cards. Michelle thanked the meeting and turned back to Margaret and Colleen to formally conclude the AGM business.

Margaret allowed an opportunity for comments and questions. She then noted that NALA made a submission to the Adult Literacy for Life Strategy, collaborated on its development and saw its publication in September 2021. Good progress was made in 2023 and 2024 on literacy planning and co-ordination structures. National and Regional Coalitions were set up, and regional literacy plans have been submitted. In addition, the National Programme Office is working on a range of other initiatives, including the Collaboration and Innovation Fund, Plain English, professional development and the Ambassador Programme. However, other progress has been disappointing, particularly in regard to tuition on the ground, largely due to funding.

The Strategy requires a cross Government and cross community approach, promoting access and widening forms of literacy provision, investing in IT and professional development, addressing provision for special needs and other vulnerable groups, ensuring progression links and promoting plain language. Part of the requirement is to develop certainty as to who does what, as the strategy unfolds. However, there is still uncertainty as to what Government plans are in relation to some commitments in the strategy such as a one stop shop for adult literacy, ambassador programmes, plain

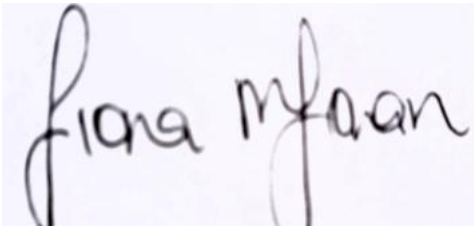
English, and eLearning and how NALA's provision should evolve in the light of what others are doing. This is why our Strategic Plan is divided into two phases, a continuation phase into 2027 and then a re-orientation and implementation phase from 2027 to 2030.

The bottom line in any Strategy is that change requires investment and a clear plan, and that crucially, for those most in need, there must be increased learning opportunities, on the ground and through eLearning. Margaret voiced fears that this is not happening; an increased tuition budget for adult literacy across the ETBs is not evident. This should lie at the heart of the Strategy. In addition, provision is dominated by ESOL, green, and digital skills at the expense of core literacy. We are not reaching the hardest to reach; the adult literacy organiser and tutor posts are being eroded, and the volunteer service is being disbanded. This critically impacts the scope for the ETBs to deliver the service. NALA has had to take steps to prevent new centers from joining Learn with NALA as we do not have sufficient funding for the required staffing, development and compliance to sustain expansion.

This means that 3 strategically important arms of the overall provision are diminished or are at risk. These are tuition capacity, the volunteer service in ETBs and the Learn with NALA eLearning platform. She asked attendees to use their voice at every opportunity to raise these issues and lobby for investment which prioritises those most at risk. She pointed to the low qualifications of older workers, with 277,000 having a lower secondary education qualification or less. The SOLAS May 2025 publication 'Lifelong Learning among Adults in Ireland' taken from Quarter 4 of the Labour Force Survey shows of all lifelong learners in 2024 for whom qualifications information is available, only 3.5% had a Level 1-3 (or lower secondary) qualification prior to starting their programme. The SOLAS report 'Monitoring Ireland's Skill Supply 2024' shows that only 3644 awards out of 151,641 QQI awards in 2023, or 2.4%, were at Levels 1-3. The most recent OECD survey of Adult Skills published in 2024 shows that since the last survey the proportion of adults with unmet literacy needs in Ireland has increased from 18% to 21%. In the meantime, everyday life for those with unmet literacy needs gets more and more complex, and they are at risk of increasing exclusion, partly due to the decline in cash use, the growth in online services, and the reluctance of organisations to provide phone numbers. NALA has been in existence since 1980, experiencing both good and lean years. We will continue to campaign for investment in adult literacy as a national strategic priority.

Closing Remarks

Colleen noted the Prison Project, how NALA is working with Traveller organisations, and the efforts to promote literacy awareness across a range of organisations. There is ample research to show that literacy changes lives and opens doors for people. It helps families and communities and promotes social and civic participation. It lies at the heart of a democratic society. That is why NALA campaigns for literacy as a human right.

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light blue background. The signature reads "fiona mcgowan" in a cursive, lowercase style.

Fiona McGowan

Company Secretary

Date: 24 April 2026