

Peaks & Plains Housing Trust

Board Member

Recruitment pack

Spring 2024



PEAKS & PLAINS
Housing Trust

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Appendix 1 – Board & Committee Meeting Schedule

1. Welcome letter

Dear candidate,

Thank you for your interest in becoming a Board Member. This pack includes information about the Trust together with details of the role. We hope this will demonstrate to you why being part of Peaks & Plains would be a worthwhile use of your time and expertise. Details of how to apply are on the final pages of the pack.

One of our members is leaving the Board at the end of March 2024 and so we are looking to recruit a new member; someone who brings skills and a sound understanding of information technology, data management and data governance.

You do not have to have experience of being a Board member to apply, although you do need to understand the role and have relevant skills. We embrace diversity on our Board and welcome applicants from a wide range of backgrounds.

As you may know, we are a Housing Association and Community Benefit Society, based in Macclesfield and working mainly across Cheshire East and the High Peak local authority areas in which we own and manage over 5,000 properties. We employ around 170 staff and our annual turnover 2022-23 was just over £31.5m.

We are ambitious and positive about our future. Our purpose is 'Working together to provide safe homes and thriving communities' and we have three key priorities:

- Be a great landlord
- Be a resilient organisation
- Create great places to live

The Trust has experienced some serious challenges over the past 4 years but is now a stronger and more resilient organisation. It has the Regulator of Social Housing's top governance rating (G1) and, in common with many similar organisations, a V2 viability rating. We are looking forward to a positive future and building on strong foundations and in 2022/2023 agreed a new Corporate Plan which sets out what we aim to achieve and our vision for 2028. We are focused on understanding our customers and providing high quality services that meet their needs. Our commitment to providing new homes and improving our housing stock remains firm and we envisage an ongoing programme of development and regeneration of some of our poorer performing housing, together with improvements to make our homes more energy efficient.

Thank you for your interest. We look forward to receiving your application.

Yours sincerely,

Jane McCall (Chair)

2. About Peaks & Plains Housing Trust

In 2023 the Board took a fresh look at the Trust and its strategic priorities. This review took into account our changed circumstances, the needs of our customers and local communities, the wider challenges faced by both the Trust and the housing sector and the opportunities these presented.

Following consultation with customers, staff and other stakeholders we agreed a new Corporate Plan in January 2023; this sets out what we aim to achieve over the next 5 years and outlines our vision for 2028.

Our purpose:

Working together to provide safe homes and thriving communities

Our priorities:

- Be a great landlord
- Be a resilient organisation
- Create great places to live

Our vision for 2028:

Be a great landlord

- Repairs done on time and to a consistently high standard.
- Consistent and clear use of customer data and feedback to improve our services.
- Improved energy efficiency of our homes and reduced carbon emissions.
- Consistently positive feedback from our customers.
- Increased numbers of engaged customers.

Be a resilient organisation

- Reductions in our cost base and overheads.
- The right resources in the right places.
- Motivated and adaptable workforce to meet new demands.
- VFM delivery of all services.

Create great places to live

- The delivery of new homes in communities with significant need for affordable housing.
- Robust and effective partnerships to the benefit of all of our customers.
- Our customers continuing to live safely in their homes.
- Continued high demand for our properties.

Values

The Trust's long-term strategy and everyday operations are underpinned by our values, which were recently reviewed and revised in consultation with staff; these values guide the culture at the Trust.



We are one team with one goal

We are open and honest with each other so that we can work together to make things better for our customers and the Trust. We do not work in silos.

We are solution focused

We come up with ideas and find answers and efficiencies wherever we can. When we mess up we say sorry, learn from it, fix it and crack on. We act and keep things moving.

We are customer focused but business minded

We take pride in our homes and our work and we give our customers the service and value for money we'd expect ourselves. We always try to do more with less.

We are reliable and do the right thing

Even when no-one is looking and we speak up if something doesn't feel right – even when that means a tricky conversation. We don't leave loose ends or unfinished work for someone else to sort out.

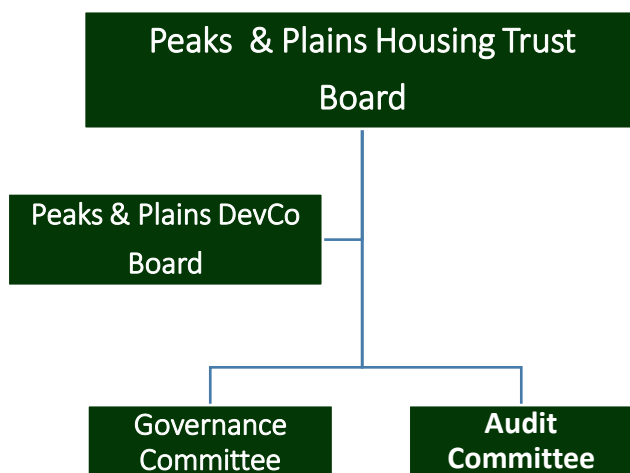
We are respectful and celebrate our differences

We are fair and we respect our differences so that we all thrive and feel at home – at work.

You can find out more information about us on our website (www.peaksplains.org) [here](#).

3. Our Board and Executive Team

Our Governance Structure & Framework



[NB: PPTradeCo, a second subsidiary of the Trust, is currently a dormant company]

The Board’s role is to set the strategic direction of Peaks & Plains and to provide oversight of its operations, ensuring that the Trust is performing in line with our values and objectives and that its affairs are conducted lawfully and in accordance with regulatory requirements.

Board members are individually and collectively responsible for pursuing Peaks & Plains’ best interest and the best interests of its customers.

Our governance framework describes the responsibilities of the Board, Board members and Executive Management Team in respect of the overall governance and strategic management of the organisation. The main aim of this framework is to ensure clarity, provide guidance to Board and Committee members and the Executive Team, and to ensure that decision making routes and powers are clear. The governance structure is also in place to allow effective scrutiny of Peaks & Plains’ corporate performance, both financial and non-financial, and to provide adequate oversight of risk.

Currently each of our Board members is required to serve on one of our two committees; the appointments to these committees are made by the Board. Occasionally members move from one committee to the other, depending on the skills mix required, retirement of other members etc.

We operate in line with the requirements set out in the National Housing Federation Code of Governance 2020.

Both the Board and committees meet regularly throughout the year; Board meetings are currently held every two months at our office in Macclesfield, with committees each meeting 4 times a year (generally remotely on-line. The meetings schedule for 2024-25 is attached.

Our Board & Committee Members

Our Board and Committee members come from all walks of life and each one brings their own perspective, skills and experience, but collectively they are responsible for pursuing the Trust's best interests.

Jane McCall (Chair)

Jane took up the position of Chair on 1 May 2020. She brings with her extensive strategic and governance experience across housing, health and education sectors. Jane's entire executive career has been spent in social housing and she held the position of Executive Director of Neighbourhoods at Trafford Housing Trust for 10 years. She has also been a Non-Executive Director for the Office for Legal Complaints (the Legal Ombudsman), and was Deputy Chair at the University Hospital South Manchester (Manchester Foundation Trust). Jane currently has a Non-Executive role at the Information Commissioner's Office and served for 5 years at the House of Commons Commission. In 2018, Jane became Chair of Tameside and Glossop Integrated Care Foundation Trust, an organisation providing acute & community health services.

Alison Hadden (Vice-Chair)

Alison brings a wealth of housing experience with her as a former CEO of Paradigm Housing, a successful interim CEO and Executive at a number of housing associations. Until recently she was Vice-Chair of Yorkshire Housing and has held positions of Chair of Stafford and Rural Homes and, following the successful merger, the Housing Plus Group. Currently, Alison is Chair of Auxesia Homes and Chair of Heyford Regeneration Ltd. She joined the Trust's Board in June 2020. Alison is passionate about providing great quality services to customers whilst continuing to ensure new homes are built for those in housing need.

Anthony Read (Chair of Audit Committee & Senior Independent Director)

Anthony joined Peaks & Plains in 2018 as a co-optee to the Audit Committee and was subsequently appointed to the Board in 2019. He had a long career in the banking sector and in 2013 set up his own business providing advice to small and medium sized businesses on matters such as strategic business issues, budget management and performance management. He has held a number of non-executive Board roles for a range of SME's. He is currently Chair of Lincolnshire Housing Partnership. He lives near Nottingham with his family

Guy Johnson

Guy is a highly experienced finance professional who has worked across a variety of public and private sectors. He has held several roles within social housing, at both an Executive and Non-Executive level and has recently worked with First Choice Homes Oldham and Riverside Group. He is currently Interim Director of Finance & Corporate Resources at Eden Housing Association in Cumbria. Guy joined the Trust's Board in June 2020.

Fiona McAuley

Fiona, a development consultant, has over 35 years of development experience within the public and private housing sector, having been involved in the delivery of around 5,000 affordable homes involving social housing and multi-tenure development. She joined the Board as a co-optee member in 2020 and was appointed as a full member of the Board in October 2021 and is Chair of the Trust's subsidiary Board (Peaks & Plains Devco Limited).

David Blanchard

David is an experienced Board member having held such roles in a wide range of infrastructure companies. David joined the Board in October 2021. He is UK Operations Director at Pario, a specialist asset management company, working to ensure effective delivery of several infrastructure projects which include some social housing projects. Previously he was Investments Director at Balfour Beatty Investments following work in similar roles in other companies. He also has over 15 years' experience at KMPG LLP working within its corporate finance and public sector audit and advisory teams.

Will McKellar

Will has worked in the Voluntary and Community sector for over 20 years, most of that time in Macclesfield where he is currently the Chief Officer of the Citizens Advice service in the town. Will has been trustee for a number of mental health charities in the past and is passionate about the impact of social based problems on mental well-being and the value of joint working across all sectors to benefit local communities. He joined the Trust's Board in October 2022.

Shaun Harley

Shaun is an executive director for Lincolnshire Housing Partnership, where he's responsible for corporate planning, HR, governance, digital and communications. Previously, he was a corporate director with Homes England, where he played a central role in re-purposing the government's housing investment agency to get more affordable homes built. Shaun grew up on a council estate in Teesside, in one of the most deprived areas of the country, and is passionate about social housing, regeneration and building cultures that help others to thrive. Shaun lives in Leeds with his family. He joined the Board in October 2023.

Zahir Yasin – Leaving the Board (end of March 2024)

Shahida Latif-Haider (Co-optee Audit Committee Member)

Shahida is a Chartered Accountant who has worked in the housing sector for over 20 years. Currently the Executive Director of Resources at Wythenshawe Community Housing (WCH) Group Limited, she has a wealth of experience in finance, compliance, risk management, assurance, governance and health and safety. She is also responsible for Governance and is the Company Secretary for all of the WCH Group entities.

Our Executive Team

Mark Howden, Chief Executive

Mark joined the Trust in May 2019 and became Chief Executive in July 2020, following a short time as Interim Chief Executive. He reports to our Board and has overall responsibility for the Strategic and Operational direction of the Trust and the delivery of our Five-Year Plan. Mark has more than 20 years' experience in housing, urban regeneration and economic development, both public and private, working across a variety of sectors including residential development, student accommodation, education, health and infrastructure.

Jules Booker, Director of Resources

Jules joined the Trust in June 2019 from Wythenshawe Community Housing Group where she was Assistant Director of Finance. She is a FCCA qualified accountant and has worked in finance for over 20 years working in both the private and not-for-profit sectors. In 2011, Jules made her move over to the social housing sector. In her role, she is responsible for the Trust's Finance, ICT, Governance, Health and Safety, Human Resources, Risk and Assurance, Procurement and Neighbourhood teams. Jules joined the Board of Magenta Living, a housing association in Wirral in April 2022, she sits on both the Audit and Risk Committee and the People and Culture Committee.

Emma Richman, Director of Operations

Emma joined the Trust in March 2020 from Great Places Housing Group, where she was Director of Assets. She has a wealth of experience with over twenty eight years' experience in social housing, having held Board Chair, Exec Director and Director Roles. Emma has degrees in Building Surveying and Architecture, Planning and the Built Environment and has worked in a range of housing associations including as an independent Board member and Chair of a housing association for 12 years. She is on the Board of First Choice Homes Oldham and is the Chair of its' Investment and Development Committee. She was recently announced as the National Vice Chair of Women in Property.

4. Board Member Role Profile & Person Specification

Role Profile

Introduction

The role of the Board is to direct the business of the Trust and to ensure that it is run effectively so as to ensure its long-term success.

The Board Terms of Reference (available on request) set out specific duties and responsibilities of the Board as a whole, these are summarised as follows:

- Set the strategic direction and objectives for the Trust, agreeing strategies, policies and plans and making decisions to support these.
- Ensure that the Trust provides safe homes for tenants and shared owners and maintains safe working arrangements for staff; ensuring that all the Trust's health and safety obligations are met.
- Provide financial oversight and control, ensuring that the Trust's resources are managed effectively to ensure its continued viability, social housing assets are not put at undue risk and that value for money is achieved.
- Ensure that the Trust has an effective risk management and internal controls assurance framework.
- Establish and oversee a sound framework for investment in both existing and new homes, ensuring that plans are implemented, and performance monitored and evaluated.
- Ensure that the Trust provides a great, customer focussed service as a landlord, ensuring that customer views and feedback is listened to and taken into account when shaping services.
- Ensure the Trust meets legal and regulatory requirements and complies with its own constitution and that its business is conducted in line with high standards of conduct and propriety.

Purpose of the Board Member role

- To fulfil the role of a company director (Board member) and to work constructively with other Board members, the Executive Management Team and other staff to ensure that the Board as a whole fulfils its role.

Key Responsibilities for Individual Board members to enable the Board as a whole to fulfil its role:

Strategic Leadership

- Provide focused strategic leadership and direction to the work of the Trust.
- Actively contribute to the development and review of the Trust's strategic/corporate plan.
- Define, uphold, promote and ensure compliance with the Trust's purpose, values, objectives, strategies and policies.

Safe Homes and Working Arrangements

- Ensure that you understand your duties as a Board member (Non-Executive Director) in terms of health and safety as it applies to the Trust.

- Ensure that the Trust complies with its health and safety duties under the relevant health and safety legislation and regulations and that it has processes for complying with these duties and adequate resources, staff and equipment to operate the business safely;
- Promote and uphold a positive health and safety culture and vision and ensure that this is reflected in all Trust policies and decisions.

Financial Oversight and Control and VFM

- Ensure an effective Business Plan and budget is in place, based on reasonable assumptions, and that they support the achievement of the Trust's strategic objectives.
- Satisfy yourself as to the integrity of financial information, based on an appropriate range of assurances, to enable the Board to approve each year's accounts prior to publication.
- Ensure that you understand the funders' requirements, including loan covenants, and ensure that the Trust complies with these.
- Provide leadership on value for money, understand the costs of the business and set targets which relate to securing value for money.

Risk, Control and Performance

- Provide leadership within a framework of prudent and effective controls that enable risk to be properly assessed, responsibly managed and controlled.
- Actively seek appropriate assurances regarding those risks and the effectiveness of controls.
- Satisfy yourself that there are appropriate mechanisms, both internal and external, to verify that the Board receives a balanced and accurate picture of how the organisation is performing.

Investment and Services

- Ensure that, in taking decisions, you consider the best interests of the Trust and its customers and promote high quality standards and effective service delivery.
- Satisfy yourself that the Trust's investment is directed towards effective and efficient use of the Trust's housing stock and towards meeting current and future needs for homes.
- Set a positive culture with a strong customer focus, ensuring that the Board takes appropriate account of customer views and priorities in the decisions it takes.

Governance and Regulation

- Ensure that you understand that regulatory framework within which the Trust operates and ensure that the Trust complies with those requirements.
- Ensure that you understand the constitutional and legislative framework as it applies to the Board and act within its powers and in line with the Trust's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.
- Satisfy yourself that the Trust's affairs are conducted to accepted standards of performance and propriety.

Conduct of Board Business

- Prepare diligently for and attend Board and Committee meetings, any additional Board meetings, making an active contribution to discussions and decision making, exercising reasonable care, skill and independent judgement.
- Work with fellow Board and Committee members constructively and respect their views.
- Provide oversight, direction and constructive challenge to the Chief Executive and Executive Team.
- Raise issues appropriately if you have concerns that the Trust is not being managed to the required standards and/or with the required level of probity.

- Act responsibly and ethically and in accordance with the Trust's Code of Conduct and the National Housing Federation Code of Governance. Ensure your behaviour as a Board Member models the values of the organisation.

Accountability and Promoting the Organisation

- Be an ambassador for the Trust to promote the success of the Trust; build and maintain good relationships with stakeholders, particularly residents, the RSH and any other related statutory agencies.
- Positively promote the Trust's purpose and values and the accountability of the Trust through openness and contact with communities, representative bodies and strategic authorities, attending ad-hoc meetings as required.
- Comply with the organisations health and safety policies and procedures.
- Understand and demonstrate the principles of confidentiality and ensure that all information gained as a Board member is treated in strictest confidence.
- Observe and continually promote the Trust's policies on equality, diversity & inclusion.

Improving Board and Individual Board Member Effectiveness

- Participate in regular reviews of collective Board and committee performance and reflect on and seek to learn from reviews of own contribution in individual Board member appraisal, so that effectiveness and performance can be monitored and enhanced.
- Participate in Board induction, training and development, including Board 'away days', and in other learning activities as required.
- Contribute to the direction of the Trust by supporting the Executive in particular projects or areas on request, e.g. recruitment or champion.
- Keep up to date with your own specialist area of knowledge or expertise and keep abreast of current developments and thinking in the sector including matters relating to housing, social policy, regulation, the political and legislative environment, governance and investment.

Person Specification

PART ONE – Knowledge and experience

- Current or recent (within three years) knowledge and experience of ICT, data management and data governance including, for example:
 - Oversight of strategies and plans for effective data management and data governance / information asset management.
 - Cyber security and managing the risks associated with use of information and communications technology.
 - Use of digital technology in improving business processes and/or in developing digital services for customers.
- Understanding of and commitment to equality, diversity & inclusion
- Understanding of the constraints of working in a regulated sector
- Understanding of the social, political, and economic environment in which social housing organisations work
- Understanding of the role of a Board Member.

PART TWO – Skills and abilities

In addition to specific skills and experience, Board Members must also be people who are:

- Committed to the purpose of the organisation, have personal values aligned to those of Peaks & Plains and who demonstrate high standards of integrity.
- Able to think and act strategically.
- Willing to seek and analyse significant amounts of critical information to reach balanced judgements.
- Pragmatic, making independent and critical judgments and assess the risks of proposed courses of action or inaction.
- Emotionally intelligent to the feelings and thoughts of others.
- Able to influence the opinions of others based on the critical analysis of information.
- Able to develop and maintain effective relationships with other stakeholders, including other Board members, staff and customers.
- Confident in their opinions and exert sufficient self-control, understanding that consensus must be reached based on compromise.
- Dedicated to having a positive impact on society and the areas in which Peaks & Plains operates.
- Willing to devote the necessary time to their duties.

5. Key Terms

Remuneration

The fees paid to Board members at Peaks & Plains (including co-optees) are currently £5379.50 per year (this covers committee membership too). We pay extra fees for specific additional roles and responsibilities, for example, to committee chairs.

The Trust will also reimburse all reasonable travel and subsistence expenses incurred by Board members for attending Board and committee meetings and other agreed events and meetings.

Time Commitment

Board members and co-optees are expected to have the capacity to be able to commit to fulfilling their duties and responsibilities as effectively as possible. As a guide, we estimate that Board members will need to commit up to 20 days a year to the role, to include:

- Effectively preparing for, attending and participating in formal Board and committee meetings (plus panels, working groups and any special meetings called from time to time).
- Attending Board training, away days and activities.
- Participating in ad-hoc discussions and electronic communications between meetings with other Board members and employees.
- Preparing and attending one's own annual appraisal meeting.

Board and committee meetings are usually held in the evenings on a Tuesday (although start times vary – please see end of pack). Board meetings are currently held every two months, with committees meeting 4 times a year.

Period of appointment

The length of time that Board members can serve on the Board tenure is governed by Peaks & Plains' Rules (its constitution) and its chosen code of governance and will not exceed six years.

Board members are usually appointed for a three year term initially. Board skills and competencies are reviewed regularly and all Board Members are appraised each year.

Location

Meetings are usually either held at the Trust's offices in Macclesfield or virtually/via digital conferencing. Occasional regional and national travel to attend conferences etc. may be necessary.

The majority of Peaks & Plains Board members live in the surrounding area in the North West. Residency in the Macclesfield area is not a formal requirement of the role, but it is important that Board Members are familiar with the region and its challenges and opportunities.

Eligibility Criteria

Our constitution places some specific limits on who can become a Board member. No one can become or remain a Board member, co-optee or committee member at any time if:

- They are disqualified from acting as a director of a company for any reason; or
- They have been convicted of an indictable offence which is not, or cannot be, spent; or
- A composition is made with that person's creditors generally in satisfaction of that person's debts; or
- They are not a shareholder (unless they are a co-optee or employee of the association or any other body whose accounts must be consolidated with those of the association); or
- They have absented themselves from three consecutive meetings of the Board in one rolling twelve-month period without special leave of absence from the Board; or
- A registered medical practitioner who is treating that person gives a written opinion to the association stating that that person has become physically or mentally incapable of acting as a Board member and may remain so for more than three months; or
- They are an employee of the Trust and their contract of employment is terminated; or
- They are a resident and are in material or serious breach of their tenancy agreement or lease and fail to rectify the breach within a reasonable timeframe as specified by the Board, or are subject to any of the following types of court order: anti-social behaviour order, anti-social behaviour injunction, demoted tenancy, or closure order; or
- They are a specifically elected or appointed resident Board member and cease to be a resident (unless the Board resolves otherwise).

If you are selected to become a Board member, you will be required to make a declaration that you are eligible to join the Board.

You will also be required to make a declaration of interests, which must be updated at least annually and with any new interests added as and when they arise.

6. Recruitment Timetable

Recruitment stage	Date
Closing date	12:00noon, Thursday 28 th March 2024
Shortlisting	From: Thursday 28 th March 2024
Panel interview (possibly virtual)	w/c 15 th April 2024 (To be confirmed)

If you wish to apply but are likely to be **unavailable w/c 15th April 2024** please email: Jen Hayball (j.hayball@peaksplains.org) as soon as possible.

7. Further information

For an informal and confidential discussion about this opportunity, please contact:

- Jules Booker (Executive Director of Resources) – j.booker@peaksplains.org
- Jen Hayball (Governance Manager) – j.hayball@peaksplains.org

8. How to Apply

To apply for this role **please send the following information by email, using the title ‘Board Member Application’ in the subject line of your email, to: GovernanceTeam@peaksplains.org**

- A **CV** of no more than **2,000 words**, including details of roles or positions held and dates (including achievements relevant to a non-executive position).
- A **supporting statement** of no more than **2,000 words**, explaining your motivation for applying for this role, what you can bring to the Board and how you meet the Person Specification.
- Full contact details (name, job title, organisation, phone and email) for **two referees** (including your employer, if you are currently employed). Please note that we will not take up references without your prior permission.

The closing date for applications is **12.00 noon Thursday 28th March 2024**. Your application will be acknowledged and treated with strictest confidence.

Please note that applications can only be considered if you submit all the requested documents.

Board & Committee Dates – 2024-25

Date	Time	Type of Meeting
16 April 2024	2.00pm	Chairs Meeting
23 April 2024	4.00pm	Board Development / Discussion / Training Session
7 May 2024	5.30pm	Audit Committee
14 May 2024	4.00pm	Board Meeting - Business Plan Review
21 May 2024	2.00pm	DevCo Board
21 May 2024	4.00pm	Board Meeting
04 June 2024	4.00pm	Governance Committee
25/26 June 2024 (Tues/Weds)	TBC	Board Away Day(s)
09 July 2024	4.00pm	Chairs Meeting
16 July 2024	5.30pm	Audit Committee
30 July 2024	2.00pm	DevCo Board (Accounts sign-off)
30 July 2024	4.00pm	Board Meeting (incl. Accounts sign-off)
10 September 2024	4.00pm	Governance Committee
11 September 2024	4.00pm	DevCo Board
24 September 2024	4.00pm	Board Meeting
01 October 2024	2.00pm	Chairs Meeting
15 October 2024	4.00pm	Board Development/Discussion/Training Session
05 November 2024	5.30pm	Audit Committee
26 November 2024	4.00pm	Board Meeting
10 December 2024	4.00pm	Governance Committee
12/13 December 2024 (Th/Fri)	TBC	Board Away Day(s)
14 January 2025	2.00pm	Chairs Meeting
28 January 2025	4.00pm	Board Meeting
11 February 2025	5.30pm	Audit Committee
25 February 2025	4.00pm	Board Development / Discussion / Training Session
04 March 2025	4.00pm	Governance Committee
11 March 2025	4.00pm	DevCo Board
25 March 2025	4.00pm	Board Meeting