**AICBRN Governance and Management**

This document is an updated version of AICBRN's original governance document, which took effect on 16th April 2021. It has been drafted by the AICBRN Manager in close consultation with the AICBRN Executive Group (AEG) and supersedes the original governance document. It is intended to apply from **21st August 2023.**

1. **AICBRN Background, Values & Objectives**

**1.1 Background**

AICBRN ('the Network') was launched in September 2019. The concept of bringing together researchers from the climate and biodiversity fields across institutions north and south has been developed by an initial core group. This researcher-led Network aims to establish large-scale and long-term integrated research projects, focused on public-good research from basic to challenge-led within the broad research themes of climate and biodiversity mitigation and adaptation, and just societal transition. This all-island action works across disciplines including science, engineering, technology, social sciences, and humanities. Leadership is dispersed and cooperative.
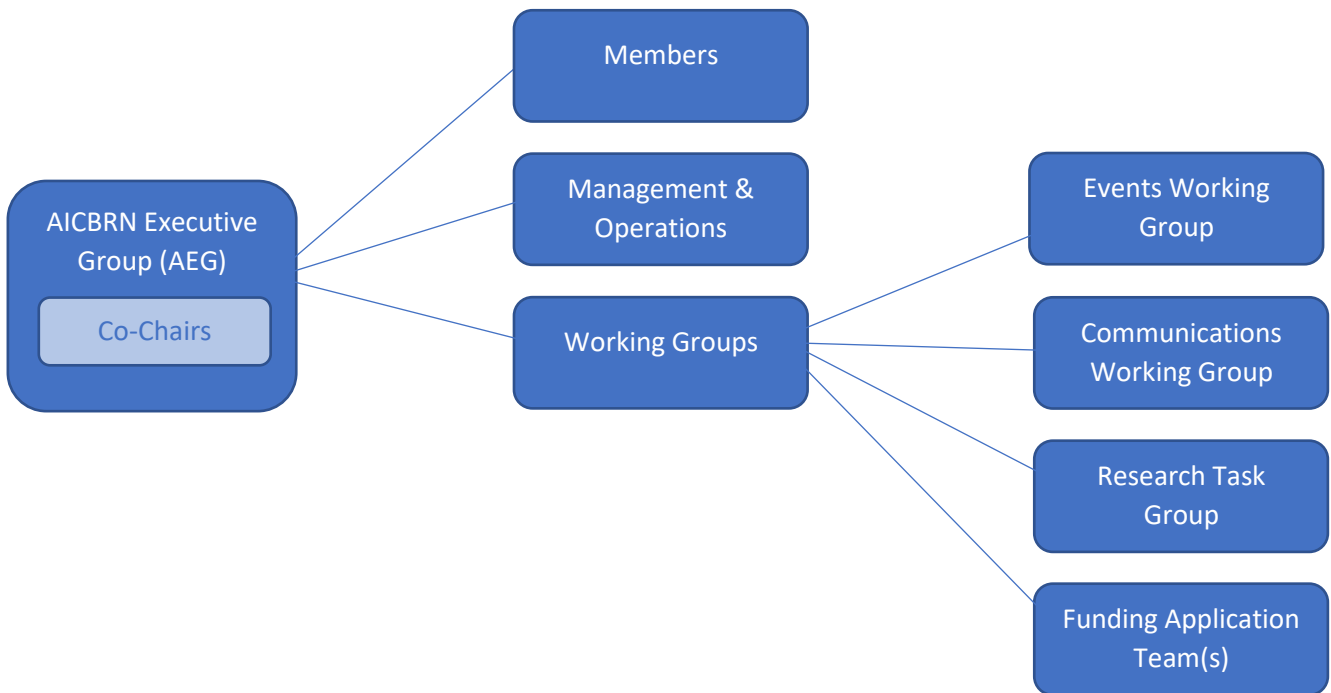


*Overview of envisaged governance structure of AICBRN.*

**1.2 Values & Objectives**

AICBRN believes that researchers working to address the climate and biodiversity emergencies can and should work together - the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Membership is open to those who are willing to collaborate and contribute to research in climate and biodiversity and who can benefit from the shared environment and resources of the All-Island Network. The Network brings together different disciplines,

viewpoints, and voices to tackle shared challenges. The diversity of disciplinarity and expertise of members across the physical, natural and social sciences, engineering, and humanities enables this Network to cooperatively undertake the essential fundamental and challenge-based research required for Ireland to successfully address the climate and biodiversity emergencies. Knitting together the Network of researchers from across the island can optimise existing research investments, identify critically needed infrastructure, and develop teams capable of not only addressing the challenges but becoming more successful in securing research funding, including both European and industrial funding adding further value. The Network is intended to be inclusive in nature and substantial efforts to expand membership are underway.

### 1.2.1 Balancing Factors & Representation

Achieving balance and representation is a particularly important AICBRN value, and the Network seeks to reflect this in the composition of all Network membership categories. When nominating and electing Co-Chairs and AEG members, and when expanding Network membership, particular consideration will be given, but is not limited to, the following balancing factors:

- Academic discipline: representation of a range of different disciplinary backgrounds is sought, within climate science, biodiversity science, climate and biodiversity change mitigation and adaptation and just societal transition;
- Gender;
- Institutional and academic research centre representation;
- Northern Ireland/Republic of Ireland based institutional/academic research centre representation.

### 2. Resourcing

Currently the Network is resourced through a MoU with the NPWS which provides support for the AICBRN Manager position and funding for workshops and meetings to facilitate collaborative work. Additional resources are provided as in-kind contributions from participating researchers and centres.

The Sunflower Foundation will contribute support for a Rapid Policy Response Unit providing research to underpin government policy for integrated responses to the climate, biodiversity and water crises in the context of land use. Research will enable just transitions in policy, business practise and individual behaviours.

Further resourcing and collaborative opportunities are currently being explored.

### 3. Membership Categories, Roles & Responsibilities

The Network operates with the following six categories of membership:

1) AICBRN Executive Group (AEG)
2) Co-Chairs
3) Members
4) Management & Operations
5) Working Groups

### 3.1 AICBRN Executive Group (AEG)

The AICBRN Executive Group (AEG) is comprised of 8-15 Network members representing the RPOs and disciplines of members and will nominate rotating climate, biodiversity and just transition Co-Chairs. The AEG will ensure the implementation of the long-term strategy of the Network, supported by working groups and operations support. The AEG meets monthly to make decisions on activities, funding and engagement strategies for the Network.

The AEG will develop a funding strategy to ensure a sustained, independent, and broad-ranging research base for integrated, informed and innovative climate and biodiversity solutions. The AEG will endorse suitable funding initiatives to pursue and approve the funding application group/s to ensure the aims and values of the AICBRN are achieved. At least one member of the AEG will represent the Network as part of the governance structure for each funded research programme.

The AEG will endorse the engagement of members with key stakeholder groups such as national funding agencies, Government departments and state bodies to ensure the aims and capabilities of the Network are known to groups involved in research funding allocation, policy development etc. The AEG will approve the inclusion of new members to the Network. Each working group will be led by an AEG member to ensure effective communication between the working groups and the AEG.

### 3.1.1 Balancing Factors

As with Co-Chair nominations, balance and diversity will be sought in the composition of the AEG, with particular consideration given to the factors mentioned in 1.2.1.

- Academic discipline: the AEG will be representative of climate science, biodiversity science, climate and biodiversity change mitigation and adaptation and just societal transition from a range of different disciplinary backgrounds;
- Gender: if possible, an equal number of male and female AEG members should be in post;
- Institutional/academic research centre balance: as far as possible, AEG composition will be representative of all academic institutions and research centres involved in the Network;
- North/south representation: at least two AEG members will represent institutions based in Northern Ireland and two will represent institutions in the Republic of Ireland.

When elected, each AEG member will be asked which institution or national research centre they intend to represent. The AICBRN Manager will keep a record of AEG member details and will provide a breakdown of AEG composition to members upon request.

### 3.1.2 Nominations, Voting & Terms

8-15 Network members are nominated and elected by a majority vote of the Network members to form the AEG. AEG members will hold their positions for an initial continuous two-year term, renewable for a further two years. Nominations come from Network members (see 3.3) in keeping with the Network's balancing factors. Members can self-nominate to become AEG members. AEG members will be appointable for a continuous 2-year term, renewable if re-nominated by the Network members. There will be a call for new AEG nominations each year to fill absented posts or at the end of a term. If more than 15 Network members are nominated, AEG composition will be decided by a vote of Network members.

The AEG may vote to revoke AEG membership due to inactivity of the member or actions in contravention of the mission of the Network. If an AEG member resigns their position, the AICBRN Manager will seek to arrange a meeting to discuss feedback for the Network. Unless requested otherwise, former AEG members will remain members of the Network and will continue to receive Network communications.

### 3.1.3 AEG Meetings & Voting Procedures

When taking decisions and voting on topics of strategic importance to the Network, two thirds of AEG members must be present at a meeting to establish quorum e.g. 10 of 15 AEG members. In the first instance, AEG members seek to gain a broad consensus on topics of strategic importance through discussion. Failing this, a vote may be taken. Voting is decided by simple majority and may be taken in the absence of some AEG members subject to

establishing quorum. When appropriate, votes may be cast by time limited email to the AICBRN Manager, who will keep individual votes confidential upon request.

The Network's operations support team and working group members may attend monthly AEG meetings in a facilitating and knowledge sharing capacity.

**3.2 Co-Chairs**

Co-Chairs provide collaborative leadership for the Network and represent research interests in climate, biodiversity and just transitions. The Co-Chairs meet monthly to discuss and provide guidance to the AICBRN Manager, on the high-level priorities and strategies of the Network, which are agreed by the AEG.

**3.2.1 Balancing Factors**

When nominating and electing Co-Chairs, consideration will be given to the balancing factors mentioned in 1.2.1 above:

- Academic discipline: Co-Chairs should represent a balance of research interests within climate, biodiversity and just societal transition;
- Gender: if possible, an equal number of male and female Co-Chairs should be in post;
- Institutional/academic research centre balance: as far as possible, a balance of Co-Chairs representing different institutions/centres will be sought;
- North/south representation: at least one Co-Chair should represent an institution/centre in Northern Ireland and at least one should represent an institution/centre in the Republic of Ireland.

**3.2.2 Nominations, Voting & Terms**

A minimum of two and a maximum of four Co-Chairs are nominated and elected by a majority vote of the AEG. Co-Chairs will hold their positions for an initial continuous two-year term, renewable for a further two years. To ensure continuity, Co-Chairs should not rotate off at the same time. Individuals nominated to be Co-Chairs do not have to be current AEG members. However, once elected, they become AEG members.

**3.3 Members**

Members are researchers or research affiliated professionals with an interest in taking part in or hearing about the activities of AICBRN. Any researcher or research affiliated professional can apply to be a member and will be admitted subject to approval by the AEG. Nominations can come from any existing member of AICBRN; however, formal nominations are not necessary for admission. Requests for admission may be sent by email to the AICBRN Manager. Once a request is received, the AICBRN Manager will place the individual's details on the AICBRN membership list. The AICBRN Manager provides monthly updates to the AEG of new membership requests. If no objections are raised by the AEG within one week of notification, the new member will remain on the AICBRN membership list. The AEG may vote to revoke membership from individuals who have grossly contravened the principles of the Network.

Efforts are ongoing to actively expand Network membership. The Network endeavours to encourage as diverse and inclusive a membership body as possible, keeping in mind the balancing factors outlined in 1.2.1. The AICBRN Manager maintains a full list of members, and records the following information:

- Title
- Name
- Gender
- Location (north/south)
- Affiliated academic institution or centre (if relevant)

- Academic discipline and area of expertise/area of research interest (if relevant)
- Email address

AICBRN complies with [Trinity College Dublin's Data Protection Policy](#), ensuring consistent application of and continued compliance with data protection law.

### 3.3.1 Benefits of AICBRN Membership

AICBRN membership provides the following benefits:

- Access to engaging monthly virtual AICBRN webinars, facilitating learning, discussion, and opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration.
- Regular communications on news related to climate and biodiversity research and policy, Network activities, and relevant funding opportunities.
- Opportunities to be involved in collaborative all island funding applications as PIs, Co-PIs, funded investigators etc.
- Invitations to in person events and workshops on relevant themes for knowledge sharing, collaboration, and building multi/trans/interdisciplinary networks.
- Opportunities to join working groups and networks to contribute to public good research, communications and policy responses.
- The possibility to apply for small grants from the Network budget to facilitate meetings and workshops.
- Support from the management and operations team, who maintain an increasingly large database of information on experts, stakeholders and funding partners within climate, biodiversity, and just societal transitions.
- Being a member of a diverse, inclusive and supportive network means suggestions and ideas for future activities are always welcome.

### 3.4 Management & Operations

An MOU with the NPWS provides financial support for an AICBRN Manager, who works with the AEG to determine a programme of work each year. The Network Manager is responsible for the facilitation of Network activities, through the management and performance of the following tasks:

- Organising, scheduling, chairing and minuting virtual monthly webinars and meetings of the Co-Chairs, AEG and Network members;
- Developing strategic documentation such as the governance document and communications plan;
- Developing and managing Network budgets;
- Overseeing and maintaining the design and content of the AICBRN website;
- Ensuring the social media presence of the Network;
- Developing and disseminating Network communications as set out in the AICBRN communications plan;
- Communicating with and organising meetings with key stakeholder groups;
- Coordinating Network working groups;
- Maintaining membership, stakeholder and contacts lists;
- Coordinating and promoting activities of the AICBRN by organising dissemination activities, communications and working events (i.e. in person workshops, meetings, etc);
- Drafting and disseminating meeting outputs and reports;
- Coordinating responses to relevant policy in NI, UK and RoI;
- Stakeholder mapping, and assessment of policy and industry needs for climate and biodiversity research;
- Prioritisation and gap analysis of research needs undertaken with members and stakeholders;
- Mapping and gap analysis of the expertise of the academics involved in the Network;
- Inventory and synthesis of research undertaken as a result of the existence of the Network;

- Liaise with AICBRN network members and stakeholders using appropriate communications tools (e.g. online collaborative tools, face to face meetings);
- Provide proactive assistance on securing national and international funding towards the sustainability of the Network;
- Analysis, collation and synthesis of targets, policies, timelines and impact needs regarding biodiversity and climate change;
- Managing and reporting progress against timelines on AICBRN activities and events.

It is envisaged that additional resources will be provided as in-kind contributions from participating researchers and centres. These additional resources will allow for the introduction of an operations team. The operations team will assist with the above tasks, develop and allocate budgets for funding applications and provide research administration support.

### 3.4.1 Ethical Management Principles

The AICBRN Manager and all Network members commit to the following ethical principles in managing the Network's strategy and operations. The Network:

- Seeks to achieve balance and representation within all membership categories, with a particular focus on the factors outlined in 1.2.1.
- Is committed to the principle of academic freedom and will seek to avoid collaborations presenting conflicts of interest that would undermine this principle.
- Acknowledges the vital role of research in delivering a rapid just transition away from fossil fuels. The Network is opposed to greenwashing and will not support collaborations with stakeholders directly involved in the production of fossil fuels.
- Commits to encouraging open dialogue and discussion amongst all members regarding the Network's ethical management principles.

### 3.5 Working Groups

Working groups are active on an "as needed" basis, including Event Organising Groups, Communications Groups, Research Task Groups and Funding Application Team(s). Members of working groups may be volunteers from any membership category of the Network, or operations staff from participating institutions and centres. AEG members will provide the AICBRN Manager with the names and contact details of those who will collaborate on working group tasks.

### 3.5.1 Events Working Groups

Events Working Groups collaborate on event management tasks, as well as the drafting and dissemination of event outputs and reports.

### 3.5.2 Communications Working Groups

Communications Working Groups collaborate to achieve the Network's communications goals as set out in the AICBRN communications plan.

### 3.5.3 Research Task Groups

Research Task Groups (RTG) foster collaboration within the Network and provide a vehicle to collectively apply for funding opportunities. The RTG will have AEG member co-leads from each of the five Network thematic areas of climate, biodiversity, adaptation, mitigation and just transition. The co-lead team will regularly report to the AEG with updates from this group.

### 3.5.4 Funding Application Team(s)

The AEG will encourage and endorse subgroups from within the Network to progress funding applications for excellent and innovative research addressing the climate and biodiversity emergency as and when opportunities for funding arise. Recommendations of research programmes and funding groups will be approved by the AEG, with decisions justified on the basis of research excellence and contribution to the vision and mission of the Network.

Research funding applications will adhere to the values and aims of the AICBRN and, as far as possible given the rules of the particular funding vehicle, will ensure that:

- Climate, biodiversity and just societal transition co-leads are appointed with accountability for different research and operational areas as well as overall accountability;
- Research projects and overheads are split between climate, biodiversity and just societal transitions in an equitable manner to ensure the research programme is addressing all three;
- Research funds are split between principal research institutions, with additional partners to ensure that no single institution is dominant in the overall research programme and that appropriate expertise across the research ecosystem across the island is engaged;
- Research projects are conducted on a collaborative basis – multi-institutional, multi-/inter-/trans-disciplinary and between Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland.

Members joining the funding application group, with representation across the disciplines and jurisdictions, will identify integrated research projects that are large scale and involve appropriate PIs from multiple institutes and multiple disciplines working on a common research theme:

- Multi-, inter- and transdisciplinary approaches, incorporating action research as well as more traditional research modes;
- Sharing infrastructure and equipment, developing national platforms for collaborative research;
- Inclusion of relevant stakeholder groups in research proposals as non-funded research collaborators/partners;
- Data platforms for national analysis and to enable collaboration with other countries by combining data sets;
- Developing research capacity at early and senior career stages across the island.