

Irish Council for Bioethics
Comhairle Bitheitice na hÉireann

Minutes of 2010 Annual General Meeting
Tuesday 30th March 2010

- In the Chair:** Dr Dolores Dooley
- Present:** Professor Alan Donnelly, Professor Andrew Green, Dr Richard Hull, Mr Turlough O'Donnell SC, Professor Cliona O'Farrelly, Professor Richard O' Kennedy, Mr Asim Sheikh BL, Dr Sheila Willis, Dr Mary Henry,
- Apologies for absence:** Dr Peter McKenna, Professor J.V. McLoughlin, Professor David Smith, Mr Stephen McMahon
- Also present:** Dr Siobhán O'Sullivan; Ms Emily de Grae; Ms Emma Clancy

1. Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting were adopted and signed.

2. Report from the Managing Director

The Annual General Meeting of the Irish Council for Bioethics began with a discussion of the company's financial statements (period ending 31st December 2010). Dr Mary Henry proposed that the statements be approved and Professor Alan Donnelly seconded this motion. There was also a motion to authorise the Directors to fix the remuneration of the auditors, this again was proposed by Dr Henry and seconded by Professor Donnelly.

Dr Siobhán O'Sullivan informed Members that negotiations regarding the possibility of broadcasting an abridged version of *Begotten Not Made* on RTE Radio 1 had ended. She explained that this cessation was disappointing but contractual constraints could not be overcome.

Ms Emily de Grae informed Council that on 17th March she attended the Roadmap Initiative for Clinical Research in Europe Workshop. She summarised the main conclusions from the workshop, which discussed the current problems experienced across Europe following the implementation of the Clinical Trial Directive in 2004. She informed Members that the aim of the Roadmap Initiative is to prepare a list of these recommendations for the European Commission to radically improve the situation for clinical research in Europe. She stated that she would circulate all of the material from the workshop to Members.

3. Future of the ICB

Dr O'Sullivan informed Council that the company Directors held a meeting on 10th March. During that meeting it was agreed that, on foot of a request from the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE), the decision to initiate voluntary liquidation would be postponed to allow the Department of Health and Children (DoHC) to consider a number of options relating to the future of the ICB. The Director's agreed to write to the DETE seeking clarification (by 25th March) on whether the remainder of the ICB 2010 budget allocation would be transferred to the company account, thereby negating the necessity for immediate liquidation. The letter also sought assurances in relation to the future role of the ICB secretariat as well as an undertaking from the DoHC that it would notify the Directors no later than October 1st 2010 whether or not funding would be made available for 2011.

Dr O'Sullivan circulated correspondence from the DoHC (received 26th March), which stated that liquidation should be avoided and which instructed the Directors to wind-up the company in an orderly fashion using the voluntary strike-off mechanism. It was stressed that the long-term structure of the ICB and supplementary arrangements had yet to be finalised.

Dr O'Sullivan also circulated correspondence from Minister Conor Lenihan TD (received 24th March) in response to the Director's queries outlined above. The Minister indicated these queries were now a matter for the DoHC as the remainder of the ICB's 2010 budget allocation had been transferred to that Department. Members expressed their disappointment and frustration with the DETE's lack of engagement despite the time and effort they had expended over the last year in devising and proposing a model for a reconfigured bioethics advisory body at that Department's request.

It was agreed that Dr O'Sullivan would send a notice for particulars to the DoHC seeking clarification on whether its instruction to wind-up the company should be interpreted as an instruction for the Council, as a voluntary advisory body, to cease operating and as a request for the Council members to tender their resignations from the organisation. It was also decided that a letter be sent to the Minister for Health, Ms Mary Harney TD, seeking another meeting in relation to the possibility of the ICB being reconfigured into an independent advisory body and pointing out the international repercussions were Ireland not to have a Government mandated bioethics commission.

4. Date of Next Meeting

The date and venue of the next Council meeting, if appropriate, is to be confirmed.