

Background

NIHACT was founded in 1978, when the Housing Associations' Charitable Trust (HACT), which operates on a UK-wide basis, donated £3,000 to create an independent charity in Northern Ireland. HACT also founded a similar charity in Scotland.

The Trust deed specifies that NIHACT has only one trustee – the Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations (NIFHA).

NIFHA promotes, represents and supports its housing association members in Northern Ireland. It is constituted as a not-for-profit company governed by its housing association members.

The Committee

The Trust deed permitted NIFHA to establish a committee to administer the Charitable Trust and to lay down the committee's rules and procedures. In 2003 a barrister clarified that the NIHACT Committee should comply with NIFHA's constitution and the NIHACT trust deed. Therefore, it is a committee of NIFHA but it must also operate within the terms of the NIHACT trust deed.

The Federation's constitution specifies that each of its committees must include at least four members of the Federation's governing body (NIFHA Council) and at least one of these members must be present for any committee decision to be valid. NIHACT Committee's therefore comprises nine members, of whom four are members of NIFHA Council. The other five do not have to be involved with housing associations but they should be able to contribute effectively to the charity's work.

As part of a three-year rota, one third of the committee members retire every year but they may be re-appointed by NIFHA Council. Each year NIFHA Council appoints the Chairperson, who must retire from that office (but not necessarily from the Committee) for at least a year after serving continuously for three years.

NIFHA Council has delegated considerable authority to the NIHACT Committee. The Committee takes all significant decision relating to NIHACT, apart from those it considers likely to:

- Expose the Trust or the Federation to major risk;
- Impose major resource commitments on the Trust or the Federation; or
- Raise major issues of principle for the Trust or the Federation.

In line with these principles, NIHACT's strategy, criteria for determining applications for assistance, budget and audited accounts are subject to approval by NIFHA Council.

The NIHACT Committee acts on behalf of the Federation in relation to all other matters within its scope. These include:

- maximising the Trust's income, controlling its costs and exercising general oversight of the personnel undertaking NIHACT's day-to-day work;
- processing applications for assistance effectively, economically and fairly;
- properly account for the Trust's resources;

- issuing an annual report; and
- commissioning projects to formulate recommendations on subjects within its scope.

The Trust has no paid staff or office facilities of its own but the Federation provides these services as a donation “in kind”. Furthermore, the Committee members undertake visits and prepare reports on the applications for assistance made to NIHACT. These two factors mean that the Charity’s administrative costs are low.

All nine places on the NIHACT Committee are currently occupied but the Trust considers it good practice to maintain a register of people interested in serving on the Committee. If you fall into this category, please complete an *Expression of Interest* form and return it to NIHACT with the confidential equal opportunities monitoring form (which should be sealed in a separate envelope).

When a vacancy arises among the five Committee members who are not members of NIFHA Council, the Committee will peruse the register and may approach individuals with potentially suitable skills or experience.

Even if you are never approached, please accept NIHACT’s sincere thanks for the interest you have already shown in the Trust’s charitable work.

Scope

NIHACT’s strategy is to give priority to applications likely to enhance the social, economic or environmental sustainability of communities in which Northern Ireland’s housing associations operate. This does not preclude it, however from assisting ‘any charitable purpose’[♦].

Further information

If you’d like further information on the Trust or the application procedure then please do not hesitate to contact NIHACT:

T: 028 9023 0446 **E:** nihact@nifha.org

[♦] As defined by the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008.