

MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING: 8TH JUNE 2021

11am, Tuesday 8th June 2021

Via Zoom

Present: Rotha Johnston (Chairwoman), Elaine Sperber, Richard Hanna, Róise Ní Bhaioill, Michael Fanning, Susan Picken, Peter Weil, Tom Gray, Carmel Mullan

In attendance: Richard Williams (CEO), Andrew Reid (Head of Production), Anne Dorbie (Chief Operating Officer), Aine Walsh (Head of ILBF), Bernard McCloskey (Head of Education), Mary McVey (Marketing Manager), Linda McGuinness (Financial Controller), Marie Shivers (PA to CEO)

Apologies: Mark Huffam, Sheila Fleming, Fionnuala Deane, Greg Maguire, Brenda Romero

No conflicts of interest were noted.

The Chairwoman noted that she will send best wishes to Sheila and Fionnuala on behalf of the Board.

1.0 Minutes of the Board meetings of 16th March 2021

1.1 The Board minutes were agreed and signed. Actions were considered.

2.0 Chairwoman's business

2.1 Two recent set visits were undertaken by the Economy Minister which had been helpful in showcasing the scale and scope of productions and the economic benefit they bring to the local economy. A meeting with the DfC Minister will take place next week to discuss strategy alignment, the Covid impact, skills development and education as well as Ulster-Scots and ILBF matters.

2.2 The Chairwoman wrote to the NIO Permanent Secretary noting our thanks for the additional one-year funding set out in New Decade New Approach, but highlighting the necessity for multi-year funding to which a non-committal response was received.

2.3 The Chairwoman thanked Board members for completing their annual reviews and the Board Effectiveness questionnaire and added that a new system for the distribution of Board papers will go live before the next meeting. Recruitment for the Chair position is underway with interviews taking place this week. Once a decision has been made, the Minister will need to approve the decision.

2.4 Sustainability and environmental policies are becoming more of an issue and will likely need to be included in the terms of reference of the Audit and Risk Committee and reported in the annual accounts going forward.

3.0 CEO's Report including Performance Indicator Report and Investment Report

- 3.1 The CEO expressed both his and colleagues' appreciation for all the time and effort the Chairwoman and Vice Chairwoman have put into our organisation and for the screen industries more generally. A huge amount has been achieved during this time which is testament to their dedication and commitment. He added that he has been privileged to work with them over the last 8 years.
- 3.2 The CEO reported positively on the KPIs and the Investment Report.

Economic Appraisal

- 3.3 The CEO noted that the Mid-Term Evaluation and Economic Appraisal had been delayed but that we expected DfE to sign off the Mid-Term Evaluation this week and the Economic Appraisal is now almost complete. Casework for the Economic Appraisal is set for 5 August.
- 3.4 The Board agreed that it was imperative that the casework did not slip further than the present 5th August date and agreeing the DfE strategy funding package was critical to Northern Ireland Screen's ability to publicly launch its new 4-year strategy in the Autumn. It was agreed that the Chair would write to the DfE Permanent Secretary emphasising the importance of timely commitment to a 4-year funding package.

SMIL

- 3.5 The CEO reported that an escalation in construction costs due to a global scarcity of building materials was set to delay the delivery of SMIL. A short delay of a couple of months, which is the current indication, could have the advantage of providing time for the overarching Belfast City Deal paperwork to catch up. However, a longer delay would be concerning and the CEO is pressing forward with a 'Minimum Viable Product' option whereby the Volumetric Stage equipment is purchased and temporarily located within Belfast Harbour's existing buildings. This option is tied in with discussion presently underway with one of the main US studios.

BBC Partnership Agreement

- 3.6 The CEO noted that he awaited a finalised draft of the Partnership Agreement with the BBC but that it had largely been agreed some time ago. The Director General Tim Davie is due to visit Belfast in late June to formally sign the Agreement and has made it clear that he is keen to see SMIL and BBC NI's studio capacity relocated to Belfast Harbour Studios. The Chairwoman asked for an agreed press release ahead of the meeting.

4.0 Finance, Audit and Governance

Risk Register

- 4.1 Anne Dorbie noted the Register was discussed in detail at the recent Audit and Risk Committee and consequently updated. The Board approved the updated Risk Register.

Audit and Risk Committee Update

- 4.2 Carmel Mullan reported on the recent meeting which was dominated by discussion around the Financial Statements. Carmel added that two policies were also brought to the meeting: the IT Policy which Tom Gray has agreed to facilitate a review of, and the Business Continuity Plan which is tabled today for the Board's approval. The Board agreed to approve the Business Continuity Plan.

Management Accounts to 31st March 2021

- 4.3 Were noted.

Strategic Resources Committee Update

- 4.4 The Chairwoman briefed on what was discussed at the last meeting, notably the Accounts, KPIs, impacts of Covid 19 and return to office working models, HR issues for staffing and trainees and an update on the Economic Appraisal and Mid-Term Evaluation.

5.0 Other Committee Updates

Screen Education and Careers Working Group - including Education Strategy presentation

- 5.1 David McConnell joined the meeting to present the Education Strategy to the Board. David summarised the strategy document and provided a short review of the various partners' activities and focus with a particular emphasis on the response and learnings from the COVID period.
- 5.2 The Chairwoman thanked David for the presentation noting the breadth of work the education team and partners are involved in.

Exhibition Strategy Presentation

- 5.3 Susan Picken summarised the Exhibition Strategy noting the 4 principles presented within the strategy and emphasising that pragmatism would have to be the touchstone during what will continue to be a very challenging period for the exhibition sector. She also emphasised the importance and value of securing a 4-year funding strategy from DfC.
- 5.4 She noted the importance of the BFI's Strategic Plan which will be developed over the next 12 months and noted positively that Film Hub NI funding has been extended to 2023.
- 5.5 The challenge facing the Cultural Task Force was noted and it was agreed that we should look at how the distribution funding for foreign films can be sourced due to the gap left by the absence of Creative Europe funding.
- 5.6 The Board endorsed the strategic direction set out and the Chairwoman thanked Susan for the presentation. She also asked to see box office figures for the UK since re-opening.

Investment Committee

- 5.7 Elaine Sperber updated the Board on production activity since the last meeting noting that the Committee had approved some very interesting projects. She noted that there would be another meeting before the end of June.

USBF

- 5.8 Richard Hanna noted the recent language development call where a number of very interesting proposals were supported. There is a second digital call out now and one project from the first digital call has launched with the others nearing completion.

ILBF

- 5.9 Róise Ní Bhaoill noted that £2.6m was awarded at the last Investment Committee meeting. The Evaluation of the ILBF is under way now with SIB currently finalising questionnaires to be issued to trainees and the general production sector in terms of how they find working with the Fund.
- 5.10 Áine Walsh noted that a new 3-year programme with the Canada Media Fund launched that day supporting co-development between NI and Canadian based companies.

Heritage and Archive

- 5.11 Peter Weil noted that the next meeting of the Committee is scheduled for 24 June. He is hopeful to resolve a number of outstanding issues by the September Board meeting.

Skills/Training

- 5.12 76 trainees are currently employed with Northern Ireland Screen at the moment. Management systems for this substantial undertaking are being reviewed and updated.

6.0 Marketing Calendar

- 6.1 The Chairwoman thanked Mary McVey for the updated marketing calendar.
- 6.2 Mary confirmed that the Value Report will be printed and ready for distribution on 25th June. The Chairwoman noted a special request for an advance copy to give to Tim Davie when he visits Belfast at the end of June.

7.0 Any Other Business

- 7.1 Elaine Sperber spoke warmly regarding her experience with Northern Ireland Screen and wished the organisation well for the future, and the Chairwoman noted Elaine's contribution both to Northern Ireland Screen directly and through her bringing children's drama production to Northern Ireland.

7.2 The Chairwoman also spoke warmly of her experience with Northern Ireland Screen and noted that collaborative working and a shared vision were the key elements of success. She closed by extending her thanks to all of the staff at Northern Ireland Screen, the Board and the Department, noting the success that has been achieved and the opportunities that lie ahead.

8.0 Date of Next Meeting

8.1 The date of the next meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday 14th September 2021 at 11am** via **Zoom**.

| Point | Detail | Actioned by | Update |
|-------|---|--------------|--------|
| 3.4 | Chair to write to the DfE Permanent Secretary emphasising the importance of timely commitment to a 4-year funding package | Chairwoman | |
| 3.6 | Draw up an agreed press release for the BBC Partnership Agreement signing | Mary McVey | |
| 5.5 | Look at how the distribution funding for foreign films can be sourced due to the gap left by the absence of Creative Europe funding | | |
| 5.6 | Provide box office figures for the UK since re-opening | Susan Picken | |
| 6.2 | Provide an advance copy of the Value Report for the BBC Director General | Mary McVey | |

Signed: 
(Chair)

Date: 14th September 2021