

MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING: 21st September 2010

10:30am Tuesday 21st September 2010
Northern Ireland Screen, Alfred House, Belfast

- Present:** Richard Hill (Chair), Brian McMahon, Tim McKane, Terry Loane, James Penny, Maurice Hayes, Mairead Regan, Peter Quinn, Roger Austin, Philip Morrow, Kate Smith
- In attendance:** Richard Williams (CEO), Andrew Reid (Head of Production), Linda Martin (Head of Finance), Áine Walsh (Head of ILBF), Marie Shivers (minutes)
- Apologies:** Ruth McCance, Anne Cormican, Moyra Lock (Head of Marketing), Bernard McCloskey (Head of Education), Elsie Brown (Operations Manager), Arthur Scott (DCAL – Observer)

Northern Ireland Screen executives absent

CEO Remuneration

- 0.1 The Chair reported that he had received a further letter indicating that DCAL was still in discussion with DFP as further queries had been raised. The Chair will take this issue to Sammy Wilson if a decision isn't reached soon.

CEO and executives joined the meeting

1.0 Chairman's Opening Remarks

- 1.1 No conflicts of interest were raised.
- 1.2 The Chair reported on the Board delegation's meeting with DETI and DCAL Permanent Secretaries and Invest NI CEO. The Board agreed to continue to press for an effective long-term solution to the governance of Northern Ireland Screen.

2.0 Minutes of the Board meeting of 26 June

- 2.1 The minutes of the last Board meeting were agreed and signed.
- 2.2 Action points from the last meeting were reviewed and the Board updated.

3.0 CEO's Report

- 3.1 The CEO summarised latest developments requesting good Board attendance at the DFA launch at Mossley Mill on 18 November.
- 3.2 Confirmation of the Ulster Scots Broadcast Fund had finally been received although Northern Ireland Screen will be required to provide the UK Film Council and DCMS with appropriate rationale and paperwork prior to receiving any funding.

Due to the extreme administrative pressures being placed on Northern Ireland Screen, the CEO asked for Board agreement to seek external consultancy support to help set up the Fund. The Board agreed.

- 3.3 The CEO reported the good news that the 2nd series of Game of Thrones was already under strong consideration at HBO. He informed the Board that securing the 2nd series for Northern Ireland could well be dependent on building more studio space in time for the second series; that is, before summer 2011. He reported positive interest in supporting the project from the Belfast Harbour Commissioners and from Titanic Quarter with Titanic Quarter offering to invest land with outline planning permission opposite the Paint Hall, and asked the Board to sanction Northern Ireland Screen taking a leading role in co-ordinating and facilitating the project. He outlined his reluctance to become the landlord and developer of such a project but highlighted that if no other option becomes apparent, Northern Ireland Screen may have to fulfil that role.
- 3.4 The Board agreed to Northern Ireland Screen taking a lead on this project. The Board agreed that becoming the developer was not attractive and reserved its position on this issue until such time as a proposition is developed and available.

4.0 Risk Register

- 4.1 The Finance and Audit Committee recommended that the corporate governance section of the Risk Register be split in two to reflect the separate issues of complying with governance, which is constantly being addressed by Northern Ireland Screen and is effectively mitigated, and the risk of failing to deliver our objectives which is growing considerably as a result of governance requirements. The Board agreed.
- 4.2 The Board accepted the Risk Register.

5.0 PI Report

- 5.1 The CEO reported Northern Ireland Screen on track on most indicators but noted that this was a deceptive picture with Northern Ireland Screen's ability to deliver future targets under greater pressure.
- 5.2 He noted again that the key target of securing activity for the Paint Hall in 2011-12 could depend on building further studio space.
- 5.3 He noted his disappointment that no development funding had been provided to date, 6 months into the financial year. He further reported that he did not envisage development funding being available prior to the end of October given that Invest NI was yet to address its concerns regarding the fund.
- 5.4 The Board accepted the report.

6.0 Committee Update Reports

Finance and Audit Committee

- 6.1 The Finance Chair reported ongoing concern that activity was being greatly slowed by the present governance landscape, that the pace of activity was now dictated by the slowest government process. He reported that this created a situation where Northern Ireland Screen was expected to cash flow a large proportion of its budget in the last few months of the year.
- 6.2 He noted DCAL's letter on the Self Assessment exercise undertaken by the Finance & Audit Committee.
- 6.3 He noted that the Committee had asked the executive to pursue a solution to a projected cash flow problem resulting from Northern Ireland Screen's VAT liabilities. He reported that there was a foreseeable cash deficit of at least £300,000 likely to occur sometime between January and March. One solution is an overdraft facility which would require sanction by DCAL and a change to Northern Ireland Screen's Articles of Association. The Finance Chair reported this as a potentially serious issue. In parallel with the executive's negotiations, the Chair undertook to include this issue in the wider governance discussions.

Investment Committee

- 6.4 Andrew Reid updated the Board on current projects. The Investment Committee were to meet after the Board meeting.

Irish Language Broadcast Fund

- 6.5 The interview process to replace Máirtín Ó Muilleoir has been completed and Cormac Ó hAdhmaill appointed to the ILBF Committee. It was agreed that the Chair would write and thank Máirtín Ó Muilleoir for his significant contribution to the Committee.

Education Policy Working Group

- 6.6 Roger Austin reported on the Enterprise, ICT and Intercultural Learning Report, just published, assessing the value of an education cross-border project, facilitated by Creative Learning Centres. He indicated that the report included strong evidence as to the value of the Creative Learning Centres.

Skills Panel/training

- 6.7 Mairead Regan noted that DEL funding had been secured in support of the Skillset Media Academy and that DEL was also funding, through Skillset, 6 seminars designed to promote collaboration between digital content providers and the television production sector.

- 6.8 Mairead also noted that Skillset, in conjunction with the BBC, DCAL and Northern Ireland Screen, was delivering The Belfast Media Festival on 7 October. This will be a high profile event with Bob Geldoff as the keynote speaker. Mairead asked the CEO to circulate the draft programme.

Engagement Committee

- 6.9 The Engagement Committee is planning to meet shortly.

7.0 Proposed funding cuts for DCAL-funded activity

- 7.1 The CEO gave a presentation on how to deliver DCAL's projected cuts. The Board was content with the principles and strategic approach to these cuts emphasising the need to focus on the economic value, the reach and penetration of the activity and the cost and timeframe to rebuild. The Board also requested that Northern Ireland Screen's direct costs are addressed equally robustly as support for external organisations.

8.0 Ulster Scots Broadcast Fund

- 8.1 Covered under CEO's Report.

9.0 Strategic Decisions – the way ahead

- 9.1 CEO to pursue DCMS regarding possibility of taking over some aspect of the UK Film Council's portfolio and to ensure that Northern Ireland is not disadvantaged by the UK Film Council's replacement structure.

- 9.2 The Board noted that the meeting with DETI, DCAL & Invest NI did not suggest that Invest NI had an appetite for addressing our concerns regarding governance and administration.

- 9.3 The Chair reiterated to the Board the need to keep pushing for one funding and governance stream, and his preference that DETI be that department. He emphasised the continuing need to drive our concerns forward as the amount of bureaucracy continues to increase.

- 9.4 The Chair undertook to have further meetings with the Permanent Secretaries and to pursue a Ministerial meeting in October. The Board agreed with this course of action and thanked Peter and Tim for their assistance, and the executive for their patience.

10.0 Any Other Business

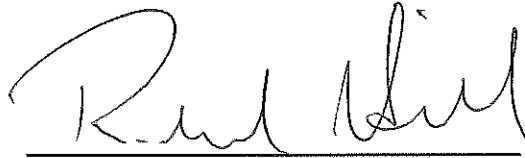
- 10.1 No other business arose. The meeting was closed

11.0 Date of Next Meeting

11.1 The next Board meeting will be held at 10:30am on Tuesday 14th December 2010.

<i>Point</i>	<i>Detail</i>	<i>To be action by</i>
3.2	Seek external consultancy support to help set up the USBF	CEO
4.1	Risk Register amended to reflect the split in corporate governance issues	Finance
6.3	Include VAT liability issue in the wider governance discussions	Peter Quinn
6.5	Write and thank Máirtín Ó Muilleoir for his significant contribution to the ILBF Committee	Chair
6.8	Circulate The Belfast Media Festival draft programme	CEO
9.1	Write to DCMS regarding possibility of taking over some aspect of the UK Film Council's portfolio	CEO
9.4	Hold further meetings with Permanent Secretaries and Ministers regarding the governance issues	Chair

Signed:



Date:

14 / 12 / 10