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Public and Corporate
Economic Consultants



Northern Ireland Screen

Strategic Review and Evaluation of the Ulster–Scots Broadcast Fund

Final Report – June 2016

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Introduction

This report presents the findings from the evaluation of the Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund (USBF or 'the Fund') completed by PACEC on behalf of Northern Ireland Screen. It covers five years of the USBF from March 2011 to March 2016 (14 funding rounds).

1.2 Terms of Reference for the Review

As stated in the Terms of Reference for the Review, the evaluation should address the following issues:

- Examination of the strategic context and the need for the Fund, including the politico-cultural environment in which it emerged, identifying the rationale for government intervention and the basis on which this was agreed;
- Outline the aims, objectives and priorities of the Fund, the extent to which these were appropriate at the time the Fund was established and their rationale. Outline their subsequent development and the rationale for this;
- Assess the extent to which the Fund's objectives have been achieved including the range, content and subject matter of funded projects, and set out any explanatory factors which may have led to any divergence from the outturns originally projected for the Fund;
- Assess the benefits delivered by the project including cultural, educational and economic;
- Assess Risk Management;
- Assess project management and controls, including the extent to which the selection criteria were adhered to in the process of evaluating applications and the transparency and consistency of processes;
- Assess the Value for Money and cost effectiveness delivered by the Fund;
- The evaluation must make recommendations, based on a series of consultations and other evidence, for any future government intervention in this sector, including the fund's operation, remit and future development to include:
 - How funded projects engaged with and dealt with Ulster-Scots themes;
 - How Ulster-Scots themes were defined, identifying good practice for the future;
 - The inter-relationship between broadcaster and committee decisions;
 - The decision making process for projects and how this could be developed;
 - How committee views are incorporated within final editorial specifications;
 - Programme review and assessment, growth in competence, feedback to producers; and
 - Any changed circumstances and new emerging opportunities which may affect the remit, operation and priorities of the Fund.

1.3 Methodology

The evaluation methodology was agreed with Northern Ireland Screen in March 2016 and contained the following key stages of work:

- Fund Familiarisation and Profiling of Data – review of documents relating to the background and rationale for the USBF; internal Fund documentation (e.g. data on number of companies funded and hours of broadcasting produced by genre etc.); USBF Investment Plans detailing Fund performance; audience data for funded programmes; and documentation relating to the application process (e.g. Fund priorities, role of the committee etc.). This was used, alongside consultation feedback, to assess the performance of the Fund against its key objectives;
- Stakeholder consultations with broadcasters, committee members and Northern Ireland Screen (see appendix A for full list of consultees) - consultations were carried out to gather feedback on rationale for and achievements of the Fund, the role of the Investment Committee and any areas for future development;
- Survey of production companies supported by the USBF – online survey of 15 production companies that received funding from the USBF which gathered feedback on the impacts achieved and the ongoing need for the Fund;
- Review of the Project Assessment Process and its Development – a desk review of a sample of successful and unsuccessful applications was completed to determine the completeness and quality of the assessments and the extent to which the specified selection criterion for the Fund was adhered to during this process;
- Benchmarking – review of the Irish Language Broadcast Fund (ILBF), the Sound and Vision Scheme (Ireland) and BBC Alba (Scotland) in relation to their scope, processes and outcomes achieved, identifying key learning for the USBF; and
- Analysis and Presentation – analysis of the data and presentation of emerging findings to the Investment Committee.

1.4 Conclusions

1.4.1 Need for the USBF

The USBF was established as a result of political developments in Northern Ireland (specifically the Hillsborough Agreement). The Fund is still needed as:

- although the main Broadcaster in Northern Ireland (BBC) has Charter requirements to reflect and promote different cultures, it would not be able to broadcast current programmes supported through the Fund without this support; and
- there is a need under The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages to promote minority languages/ safeguard culture and heritage.

The USBF was established at a time when the Ulster-Scots sector was still in its infancy and therefore the aims and objectives of the USBF should be reviewed and new outcome measures should be set to reflect:

- TV broadcasting hours;
- Ulster-Scots language programmes as a percentage of the broadcast time;
- Development of Ulster-Scots programmes that increase respect for Ulster-Scots language, culture and heritage (monitoring survey results above baseline levels every three years);
- Numbers trained in media from the Ulster-Scots sector; and
- Percentage increase in people from both communities understanding the Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture.

1.4.2 USBF Operation and Delivery

Investment Committee Membership

Each Investment Committee member is initially appointed for two years with eligibility for reappointment; as many of the committee members have now served over two years the committee should be refreshed during 2016/17.

Going forward, the Investment Committee should incorporate the following:

- Appointment of the Committee chair every four years in line with appointment of the USBF Board member of Northern Ireland Screen (appointed by the Minister of the sponsoring department);
- A BBC representative nominated by the BBC;
- A representative nominated by the Ulster-Scots Agency;
- Three independent members recruited through an open competition and endorsed by the Board of Northern Ireland Screen, bringing the total to 6 members.

It is understood that previously it has been difficult to recruit Investment Committee members from the Ulster-Scots community, therefore there is a need to raise awareness of the Fund, the benefits it brings and the vacancies on the committee once these are available.

A briefing/ training session should be held with the Investment Committee once new members are appointed to cover the role of the committee; the learnings gained; the impact the USBF is expecting to deliver; and the current strategy in place to deliver these.

Application / Assessment Process

- The current process involves an initial review of the application submitted by Northern Ireland Screen and this assessment is then provided to the Investment Committee, along with the treatment, for review and final decision. However the Northern Ireland Screen assessment forms do not provide sufficiently detailed information on how decisions are made (e.g. how the project meets USBF priorities or how it is additional to content currently being broadcast. For example, the assessment of additionality for the Northern Visions application under the 14th call states “this series would be additional” and no further detail is provided on how it is additional or the evidence to support this; there is no evidence other than Investment Committee meeting minutes to detail how decisions to fund a project are arrived at.

- The involvement of an Ulster-Scots advisor/expert during production is set out in letters of offer and this is welcomed.
- The Mackin report (2015)¹ recommended that professional in-house expertise in Ulster-Scots at an operational and programming level at the BBC was essential as this would facilitate corporate in-house leadership and provide a focus for potential opportunities and collaborations. We support this recommendation (and understand it is going ahead) in order to address issues that have arisen in relation to the extent and depth of Ulster-Scots content within BBC USBF supported programmes.
- Feedback from production companies indicates high levels of satisfaction with the application and assessment timescales as well as communication on the progress of their application, however feedback included the need for greater clarity on the types of projects that would be funded by the USBF.
- Feedback from production companies and committee members suggest the overall structure of the application and assessment process works well and the need for a broadcaster commitment to be confirmed as part of the application process should be maintained in order to provide assurance that the programme will be aired and has already been reviewed and assessed by the broadcaster at an early stage.

Programme Management

While the Investment Committee has provided input into funded productions through one to one meetings with production companies, consultee feedback suggests that funded projects have not always successfully engaged or dealt with Ulster-Scots themes. While this will be strengthened through the appointment of a BBC Executive Producer for BBC productions, there is also scope for further conditionality in Letters of Offer on how issues are referenced, the percentage of Ulster-Scots language content and penalties if these are not delivered on. These conditions should also take into account the needs of broadcasters. For example, the Austria “Fund for the Promotion of Non-commercial Broadcasting” or the Croatia “Fund for the Promotion of Pluralism and Diversity of Electronic Media” both state that the administering organisation has the right to request information / evidence that the original commitment is being fulfilled and in the absence of satisfactory evidence, funding can be withdrawn.

Relationship with broadcasters

There is a strong relationship between the USBF Investment Committee and the BBC, however feedback suggests a less well developed relationship with other broadcasters. Feedback provided by the BBC highlights the BBC’s commitments following the Mackin Report² on its Ulster-Scots output, including how the appointment of a senior editorial figure with lead responsibility for Ulster-Scots programming across radio, television and online, will facilitate closer and co-ordinated working with the USBF Committee and that it will allow the BBC to develop its links with the sector and a range of stakeholders. As noted above, it is important that the appointed BBC Executive with responsibility for Ulster-Scots is also BBC representative on the Investment Committee in line with

¹ Maureen Mackin Consulting (2016) *Towards a new BBC editorial strategy for Ulster Scots*

² Maureen Mackin Consulting (2016) *Towards a new BBC editorial strategy for Ulster Scots*

the ILBF. Any conflicts of interest between the appointee's role as an Investment Committee member with responsibility for delivering the Fund and his/ her responsibilities to the BBC should be managed with the Chair.

1.4.3 USBF Performance

Overall, the Fund has performed well against its targets in each year from 2011/12 – 2015/16, meeting 100% of its KPIs in three of the five years. It met 75% of its KPIs in 2011/12 (the KPI not met related to delivering 20 additional hours of Ulster-Scots programming, this target was thereafter reduced to 12 hours) and 67% in 2014/15 (the two KPIs not met related to commissioning 12 additional hours of Ulster-Scots programming and one programme to receive an international broadcast).

In addition, BBC Audience Index data suggests high levels of audience satisfaction and feedback from production companies, broadcasters and other key stakeholders highlight the positive impact of the Fund.

Production Companies

Feedback from production companies that have benefitted from the USBF highlights that it has had positive cultural, educational and economics impacts.

While it is difficult to gauge the economic impact of the Fund as production companies often employ short-term or temporary workers, seven production companies (63.6%, base=11) have increased employment as a result of involvement with the USBF (23 roles (8 of which are temporary/freelance), and 9 of which now skilled in Ulster-Scots television production). In addition, two thirds of the fifteen production companies (n=10) said that involvement with the USBF had increased company turnover and companies also reported high levels of satisfaction with the support provided.

Key areas for development included the need for greater clarity on the funding priorities, what type of projects can be funded and what constitutes Ulster-Scots content. In addition, feedback highlighted a perceived disparity between the objectives/priorities of the USBF and broadcasters.

Broadcasters / Other Key Stakeholders

Feedback from key stakeholders highlighted that the Investment Committee had established a strong relationship with the BBC and welcomed the commissioning of the Mackin report and its findings regarding how the Ulster-Scots content of funded programmes could be improved. However, it was suggested that the relationship between the Investment Committee and UTV is less well developed. While feedback from the Investment Committee highlighted the desire for more Ulster-Scots programmes to be broadcast by UTV, feedback from the broadcaster emphasised that programmes need to have sufficient popular appeal to equal or outperform programmes in a similar primetime slot, and that the Investment Committee did not have a sufficient appreciation of the commercial realities it operates under.

1.4.4 Fund Remit

Feedback from production companies highlighted the need for greater flexibility in what can be funded by the USBF. In particular, respondents noted that a strong Ulster-Scots culture exists that requires more than historical documentaries and the Fund should be open to funding more fictional/ drama/ animation/ musical Ulster-Scots productions. Investment Committee feedback also highlighted opportunities for the Fund to review its priorities based on what has attracted more / less interest as well as developments within the sector. However, it is recognised that dramas are expensive to produce and there is a limitation on the broadcaster contribution (25% of total project funding), therefore given the size of the Fund and that any change to its scope would require a greater broadcaster contribution, there is limited opportunity to support this genre.

1.5 Recommendations

Operation

- Investment Committee Membership:
 - We recommend that the Investment Committee is refreshed and recruitment for committee members whose terms have expired takes place as planned during 2016-17. It is essential that the new committee have knowledge of Ulster-Scots language, culture and heritage, at least one member should have production expertise, and one member should be from the Ulster-Scots community. Any appointed Executive Producer for Ulster-Scots programming in the BBC should become the BBC nominee on the Investment Committee and any conflicts of interest should be managed with the Chair. Given that all of the Investment Committee are outside their two-year period, we recommend that recruitment takes place in a phased manner.
 - We recommend that awareness of the Fund is raised with potential Investment Committee members in order to attract applications for membership.
 - We recommend that training sessions are held once new Investment Committee members are appointed to: outline the roles/ responsibilities of the Committee and learnings from previous work (this report/ the Mackin Report etc.); to meet the Broadcasters and understand their needs / how they could work together; meet production companies to understand their needs; and understand the monitoring and reporting processes within Northern Ireland Screen.
- USBF Commissioning Process Strategy: We recommend that a Commissioning Strategy be developed by the Committee on the basis of discussions with key stakeholders in the Ulster-Scots sector and broadcasters, and within the context of relevant funding, policy and other considerations, to detail the vision and future priorities for the USBF as well as strategic objectives and smart targets. Specific outcome measures should be set to reflect: TV broadcasting hours; Ulster-Scots language programmes as a percentage of the broadcast time; Ulster-Scots programmes that increase respect for Ulster-Scots language, culture and heritage (monitor survey results above baseline levels); economic/ social benefits (e.g. numbers trained in media from Ulster-Scots sector); and percentage increase in people from both communities understanding the Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture.

- Application process:
 - We recommend that detail on the types of projects that would be funded by the USBF and examples should be provided as part of the guidance for applicants / in the Commissioning Strategy.
 - We confirm the need to retain the broadcaster letter as a requirement of the application process.

- Assessment: We recommend that greater detail is provided in the Northern Ireland Screen assessment form and provided to the Investment Committee to make funding decisions. This should include, for example, detail on how the proposed project is additional using evidence provided by the production company / broadcaster.
- Expert involvement: We support the fact that Northern Ireland Screen require Ulster-Scots advisors/ experts in all their letters of offer. We recommend that the Ulster-Scots expert is involved at all stages of production (pre, during and post production), and that a clear indication of how the expert will be used at each stage is provided to the Investment Committee as part of the application.
- Ulster-Scots Executive Producer: We support the recommendation of the Makin report (2015)³ that there is professional in-house expertise in Ulster-Scots at an operational and programming level at the BBC.
- Ulster-Scots Language: We recommend that letters of offer include as appropriate conditionality of funding linked to a satisfactory percentage of Ulster-Scots language content in language programmes. There should also be an agreement on the percentage of language programmes to be delivered by the Fund. However, it is recognised that there are difficulties in defining what a language programme is, and this definition should be agreed. Thereafter, the exact numbers/ percentage of the Fund dedicated to language programmes should be agreed with the Broadcasters, although Northern Ireland Screen should be actively seeking the maximum that can be obtained.
- Investment Committee Meeting minutes: We recommend that committee meeting minutes include a summary of actions and who is responsible to implement these / by when. Progress against these actions should be reviewed at the start of the following meeting.

Remit / Future Development

Issues for consideration in the future development of the fund include:

- We recommend that a piece of work is completed to explore the potential impact of increasing the Ulster-Scots Fund and the further contribution this could make to Northern Ireland government strategies;

³ Maureen Mackin Consulting (2016) *Towards a new BBC editorial strategy for Ulster Scots*

- We recommend that skills development funding is provided, similar to that provided by the ILBF⁴ or the “Fund for the Promotion of Non-commercial Broadcasting”⁵ in Austria⁶ to develop television production skills in the Ulster-Scots sector;
- We recommend that there should be increased diversity of programming - to include a greater spread of genres as well as historical documentaries (whilst recognising that dramas will be difficult to support given the size of the Fund); and
- We recommend the remit of the Fund should be formally extended to include audio content, however this should represent no more than 10% of the total funding allocation.

⁴ The ILBF provides support for a suite of training and development programmes (e.g. Trainee Assistant Producers; Trainee Producer /Director & Trainee Senior Producer Schemes; New Entrant Trainee Scheme with Local Production Companies & Northern Visions (local TV station); Broadcasting Scheme with Local TV Station Northern Visions/NvTv; MA in Film & TV Management; MA in Documentary Practice; Skills Development Bursary Fund; Group courses; Radio Training)

⁵ The fund supports three types of activity and divides its resources in the ratio 80:10:10 on, respectively: content and project funding. This refers to the production and broadcast of programmes or to the funding of projects that lead to the production and broadcasting of programmes (including tradition/heritage); Education Funding. Supporting training of both, commercial and non-commercial broadcasting technical staff; and Research Funding. Supporting the conduct of audience research.

⁶ European Commission (2010) State aid No N 632/2009 – Austria Nichtkommerzieller Rundfunk-Fonds

2 TERMS OF REFERENCE AND METHODOLOGY

This report presents the findings from the evaluation of the Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund (USBF or ‘the Fund’) completed by PACEC on behalf of Northern Ireland Screen. It covers five years of USBF from March 2011 to March 2016 (14 funding rounds).

This section presents an overview of the USBF, sets out the evaluation terms of reference and describes the methodology used.

2.1 The Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund

In 2010 the UK government committed to funding the USBF at £1 million a year for five years from 2010 to 2015. This funding came through the British Film Institute from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to Northern Ireland Screen, which established an Ulster-Scots Investment Committee to oversee the funding. When the £1 million was initially provided in January 2011 this was to be spent by April 2011, however it was later recognised this was not feasible and amended so that any underspend could be carried forward. Funding is currently secured for four more years from 2016 – 2020.

Table 2:1: Overview of the USBF

Aspect	Detail
Aim	To ensure that the heritage, culture and language of Ulster-Scots is expressed through moving image. The USBF also aims to foster the Ulster-Scots independent production sector in Northern Ireland and to fund high quality Ulster-Scots cultural TV programmes for a Northern Ireland audience.
Key Objectives	Key objectives of the USBF are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To deliver 12 additional hours of Ulster-Scots programming per annum in a range of genres conducive to the delivery of the heritage, culture and language aim; Broadcast 90% of the USBF funded programming within 9 months of delivery; Reach a significant Northern Ireland audience, primarily but not exclusively through broadcast television, with an initial audience target of 40,000 people in Northern Ireland; Achieve high levels of audience satisfaction amongst those within the Northern Ireland audience who express a particular interest in Ulster-Scots; and Achieve general audience satisfaction levels consistent with those for other local programmes broadcast in Northern Ireland of a similar genre in a similar broadcast slot.
Management	Managed by Northern Ireland Screen; within this the Investment Committee has the power to make all investment decisions relating to the USBF.

Aspect	Detail
Committee Membership	The Investment Committee is made up of six members. One member of the Northern Ireland Screen Board is the chair of the Investment Committee. The other members are a nominated member from BBC NI who represents broadcasting interests generally, a nominated member from the Ulster-Scots Agency and three independent representatives on behalf of the Ulster-Scots audience in Northern Ireland.
Funding	£1million a year for five years from 2010 to 2015. The Fund will invest up to £400,000 per project, up to a ceiling of 75% of the overall agreed project costs (although given the size of the fund it was and still is envisaged that project funding will be limited to £250,000 in all but the most exceptional circumstances). Where the aid intensity is 75%, at least 70% of costs must be spent in Northern Ireland. Where the aid intensity is at a lower level, the percentage spend in Northern Ireland must be equivalent to the percentage aid intensity, for example if the aid intensity is 50%, at least 50% of costs must be spent in Northern Ireland.
Funding Criteria	Applicants to the USBF must be registered independent companies with a permanent agency in Northern Ireland. The USBF will accept co-production arrangements where the co-producer does not have a permanent agency in Northern Ireland provided the project and the co-production clearly fulfil all of the stated criteria and the project, in the view of the Investment Committee, contributes more significantly to the aims of the USBF than a similar project without the co-production arrangement.
Eligibility	The USBF is open to all broadcasters who can demonstrate a significant reach across the whole of Northern Ireland. The proposed project should be additional to the Ulster-Scots heritage, cultural and/or language programming that the broadcaster was transmitting prior to the availability of the USBF. In assessing additionality, the Investment Committee will have due regard to the number of hours of Ulster-Scots programming previously transmitted by the broadcaster, the value of the broadcaster's Ulster-Scots independent production commissions within Northern Ireland, and the overall quality of the Ulster-Scots heritage, cultural and/or language programming previously transmitted by the broadcaster.
Timings	The Ulster-Scots Investment Committee makes funding decisions a minimum of twice a year and a maximum of four times per year. In exceptional circumstances decisions may be made outside of this time framework.

Source: USBF Guidelines

2.2 Terms of Reference for the Review

As stated in the Terms of Reference for the Review, the evaluation should address the following issues:

- Examination of the strategic context and the need for the Fund, including the politico-cultural environment in which it emerged, identifying the rationale for government intervention and the basis on which this was agreed;

- Outline the aims, objectives and priorities of the Fund, the extent to which these were appropriate at the time the Fund was established and their rationale. Outline their subsequent development and the rationale for this;
- Assess the extent to which the Fund’s objectives have been achieved including the range, content and subject matter of funded projects, and set out any explanatory factors which may have led to any divergence from the outturns originally projected for the Fund;
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 - The decision making process for projects and how this could be developed;
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2.3 Methodology

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- Fund Familiarisation and Profiling of Data – review of documents relating to the background and rationale for the USBF; internal Fund documentation (e.g. data on number of companies funded and hours of broadcasting produced by genre etc.); USBF Investment Plans detailing Fund performance; audience data for funded programmes; and documentation relating to the application process (e.g. Fund priorities, role of the committee etc.). This was used, alongside consultation feedback, to assess the performance of the Fund against its key objectives;
- Stakeholder consultations with broadcasters, committee members and Northern Ireland Screen (see appendix A for full list of consultees) - consultations were carried out to gather feedback on rationale for and achievements of the Fund, the role of the Investment Committee and any areas for future development;
- Survey of production companies supported by the USBF – online survey of 15 production companies that received funding from the USBF which gathered feedback on the impacts achieved and the ongoing need for the Fund;
- Review of the Project Assessment Process and its Development – a desk review of a sample of successful and unsuccessful applications was completed to determine the completeness and quality of the assessments and the extent to which the specified selection criterion for the Fund was adhered to during this process;
- Benchmarking – review of the Irish Language Broadcast Fund (ILBF), the Sound and Vision Scheme (Ireland) and BBC Alba (Scotland) in relation to their scope, processes and outcomes achieved, identifying key learning for the USBF; and
- Analysis and Presentation – analysis of the data and presentation of emerging findings to the Investment Committee.

The following sections present the evidence collected during each stage of the methodology. The remainder of the report is structured as follows:

- Section 3 – sets out the strategic context underpinning the establishment of the Fund in 2010 and the current strategic and policy environment it operates in;
- Section 4 – assesses project activity supported by the USBF;
- Section 5 – presents feedback from stakeholders, broadcasters and production companies on the need for the Fund and its impact to date;
- Section 6 – assesses USBF fund management and processes;
- Section 7 – compares the activity of the USBF with the ILBF, the Sound and Vision Broadcast Fund and BBC Alba; and
- Section 8 – presents the overall conclusions and recommendations from the review.

3 CONTEXT / RATIONALE FOR THE FUND

3.1 Introduction

This section examines the strategic context when the USBF was established and presents evidence regarding the continuing need for the Fund.

3.2 Background to the Establishment of the USBF

There are a number of policies and strategies which reinforce the need to promote/ safeguard minority cultures, language and heritage. Since 2010 the USBF has sought to do this through moving image.

3.2.1 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is a human rights treaty setting out the civil, political, economic, social, health and cultural rights of children. The UK Government ratified the Convention in 1991 and is bound to it by international law.

Articles 29, 30 and 31 in particular, which deal with the goals of education, children of minorities/indigenous groups and leisure, play and culture, are of significance to the USBF. These articles state that:

- Children's education shall be directed to the development of respect for their own cultural identity, language and values and that of others;
- Children have the right to enjoy their culture, practice their religion, use their own language; and
- Children have the right to join in a wide range of cultural activities, the opportunities for which shall be appropriate and equal.

3.2.2 European Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (1994)

The European Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities sets out principles to be respected as well as goals to be achieved by EU states in order to ensure the protection of national minorities. Parties to the Framework Convention undertake to promote full and effective equality of persons belonging to minorities in all areas of economic, social, political, public and cultural life, together with conditions that will allow them to express, preserve and develop their culture, religion, language and traditions. They have to ensure freedom of assembly, association, expression, thought, conscience, religion and their access to and use of media. The Convention also provides guidelines for linguistic freedom and rights regarding education.

3.2.3 The Belfast / Good Friday Agreement (1998)

The Good Friday Agreement was made with the endorsement of the participants in the multi-party negotiations and set out a plan for devolved government in Northern Ireland on a stable and inclusive basis. In Strand Three of the Agreement ('Rights, Safeguards and Equality of Opportunity') the following commitments were given in relation to 'Economic Social and Cultural Issues': 3. *All participants recognise the importance of respect, understanding and tolerance in relation to linguistic*

diversity, including in Northern Ireland the Irish language, Ulster-Scots and the languages of the various ethnic communities, all of which are a part of the cultural wealth of the Island of Ireland.

3.2.4 European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (2000)⁷

The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (the Charter) is an international convention designed to protect and promote regional and minority languages as a threatened aspect of Europe’s cultural heritage. For this reason, as well as containing a non-discrimination clause that concerns the use of these languages, it also provides for measures that offer active support for them. The UK Government ratified the Charter in March 2001 and undertook to protect and promote Ulster-Scots. The Charter states: *‘The Parties undertake to promote, by appropriate measures, mutual understanding between all the linguistic groups of the country and in particular the inclusion of respect, understanding and tolerance in relation to the Ulster-Scots language among the objectives of education and training provided within its country and encouragement of the mass media to pursue the same objective (Article 7, part 3)’*.

The Ulster-Scots language has Part II status, which sets out objectives and principles on which policies, legislation and practice should be based. These objectives and principles are considered to constitute the necessary framework for the preservation of regional or minority languages. Progress on implementation of the Charter is measured every three years by a Committee of Experts (COMEX) from the Council of Europe. Following a visit in September 2009, the COMEX recommended that the UK authorities, as a matter of priority, *‘adopt a strategy to enhance and develop Ulster-Scots, in co-operation with the speakers’*.⁸

Note: following Brexit, the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages is a Council of Europe and not an EU treaty.

3.2.5 The Northern Ireland (St Andrews Agreement) Act (2006)

The St Andrews agreement resulted in amendments to the NI Act 1998 to place a duty on the Executive to adopt a Strategy setting out how it proposed to enhance and develop the Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture.

3.2.6 The Hillsborough Agreement (2010)

The Hillsborough Agreement of February 2010 addressed ways to progress with outstanding matters from the St Andrews Agreement, specifically *“the need to enhance and develop the Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture and [the Government would] support the incoming Executive in taking this forward’*.

⁷ Council of Europe: Committee of Ministers, Recommendation CM/RecChL (2010)4 of the Committee of Ministers on the application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages by the United Kingdom, 21 April 2010

⁸ Council of Europe: Committee of Ministers, Recommendation CM/RecChL (2010)4 of the Committee of Ministers on the application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages by the United Kingdom, 21 April 2010

The Hillsborough Agreement provided for funding of £5 million to establish an Ulster-Scots broadcasting fund to provide parity with the already existing Irish Language Broadcast Fund (ILBF).

3.2.7 Department of Education: Languages for the Future – Northern Ireland Languages Strategy (2012)

An objective of the strategy is ‘to Sustain, Maintain and Promote our Linguistic and Cultural Identities and Uniqueness’, under this objective the strategy states ‘it is important that each language be promoted as part of the shared cultural and economic wealth of Northern Ireland. It should furthermore be recognised that Irish and Ulster-Scots have differing needs and requirements and, where this is the case, it is fitting that these needs and requirements should be addressed independently and appropriately’.

One of the main recommendations from this strategy is that ‘an awareness of, and respect for, Ulster-Scots traditions be encouraged, and steps taken to examine ways of employing Ulster-Scots linguistic and cultural icons’.

3.2.8 Department for Culture Arts and Leisure: Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture strategy (2015-2035)

The purpose of the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure strategy is to enhance and develop the Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture during 2015-2035. The key aims of the strategy are to:

- Promote and safeguard the status of, and respect for, the Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture;
- Build up the sustainability, capacity and infrastructure of the Ulster-Scots community; and
- Foster an inclusive, wider understanding of the Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture in a way that will contribute towards building a strong and shared community.

The strategy identifies areas relating to Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture, specifically⁹:

- *“To increase the amount and quality of Ulster-Scots media provision, particularly television broadcasting and online material;*
- *To develop Ulster-Scots as a living language in line with the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages;*
- *To increase the sustainable capacity of the Ulster-Scots community sector by promoting cultural and heritage based tourism;*
- *To maximise the economic and social benefits of the Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture; and*
- *To increase positive cross-community attitudes towards, and a wider understanding of, the Ulster-Scots.”*

⁹ Department for Culture Arts and Leisure: Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture strategy (2015-2035)

Actions in the 2015-35 Ulster-Scots Strategy relevant to the USBF are¹⁰:

- *“Develop creative potential within the Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture community to create and contribute to Ulster-Scots programming;*
- *Support projects and initiatives to increase Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture programming;*
- *Develop a Media Training Scheme for Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture;*
- *Ensure clear and effective mechanisms are in place to provide effective management of the Ulster-Scots content of USBF-supported programmes in order to achieve value for money against the stated objectives of the Fund;*
- *Develop cooperation with all broadcasters to promote Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture in a more positive and quality way;*
- *BBC NI to increase the quantity and improve the quality of Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture programming; and*
- *Develop Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture ‘influenced’ creative industries.”*

3.2.9 Need for the Fund prior to 2010 and currently

The Fund was established as a result of political negotiations leading to the Hillsborough Agreement in 2010 and as a result no business case or economic appraisal was developed at the outset. Papers provided to the consultants highlighted that prior to the Fund there was some limited Ulster-Scots radio and TV provision and specific evidence of need for the Fund included¹¹:

“Prior to the establishment of USBF:

- *Existing provision was inadequate;*
- *There was no dedicated radio station or TV station for Ulster-Scots;*
- *BBC Radio Ulster broadcast approximately 52.5 minutes per month or 12.07 minutes per week (and not all of which was language related); and*
- *There were no other Ulster-Scots language programmes from other broadcasting sources.*

The Audience / Demand:

- *There was a healthy audience for Ulster-Scots broadcasting that was not being satisfied;*
- *The Nicht o Ulster-Scots broadcast on Saturday night in 1999-2000 had the third highest viewing figures on BBC2 that year (120,000 viewers according to BBC Annual report).*

Problems:

- *The obligations of the European Charter in relation to Ulster-Scots and media access were not being met;*
- *There were inequalities in how BBC Northern Ireland dealt with the two minority languages communities; and*

¹⁰ Department for Culture Arts and Leisure: Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture strategy (2015-2035)

¹¹ Information contained in a memo from Ulster-Scots Heritage Council (now Ulster Scots Community Network) dated November 2005¹¹

- *There was no presence or representation of the Ulster-Scots community in either the BBC's production staff or on any of their key committees and bodies."*

Currently there is still a need for the Fund. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and the political negotiations in Northern Ireland require that the Ulster-Scots language, culture and heritage are promoted/developed. The USBF provides a mechanism for promoting Ulster-Scots language, culture and heritage and broadcaster feedback highlighted they would be unable to broadcast the programmes currently funded by the USBF without the support provided (see section 5.2).

3.3 BBC NI

BBC NI is the main broadcaster of Ulster-Scots content and the call for applications issued by the USBF often coincides with BBC commissioning rounds.

The current Charter¹² states that the BBC exists to serve the public interest and that it shall be "independent in all matters concerning the content of its output, the times and manner in which this is supplied, and in the management of its affairs". The agreement¹³ which accompanies the Charter outlines the public purpose of the BBC in representing the UK, its nations, regions and communities, specifically:

"In developing (and reviewing) the purpose remit for representing the UK, its nations, regions and communities, the Trust must, amongst other things, seek to ensure that the BBC:

- *(a) reflects and strengthens cultural identities through original content at local, regional and national level, on occasion bringing audiences together for shared experiences; and*
- *(b) promotes awareness of different cultures and alternative viewpoints, through content that reflects the lives of different people and different communities within the UK.*

In doing so, the Trust must have regard amongst other things to:

- *(a) the importance of reflecting different religious and other beliefs; and*
- *(b) the importance of appropriate provision in minority languages".*

¹² Broadcasting: Royal Charter for the continuance of the British Broadcasting Corporation (2006)

¹³ Broadcasting: An Agreement Between Her Majesty's Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport and the British Broadcasting Corporation (2006)
(http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/assets/files/pdf/about/how_we_govern/agreement.pdf)

3.4 Appropriateness of Aims and Objectives for USBF

The current aims and objectives of the USBF are outlined in table 3.1.

Table 3:1 Current Aims and Objectives for USBF

USBF
<p>Aim: To ensure that the heritage, culture and language of Ulster-Scots is expressed through moving image. The USBF also aims to foster the Ulster-Scots independent production sector in Northern Ireland and to fund high quality Ulster-Scots cultural TV programmes for a Northern Ireland audience.</p>
<p>Key objectives of the USBF are¹⁴:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To deliver 12 additional hours of Ulster-Scots programming per annum in a range of genres conducive to the delivery of the heritage, culture and language aim. • Broadcast 90% of the USBF funded programming within 9 months of delivery. • Reach a significant Northern Ireland audience, primarily but not exclusively through broadcast television, with an initial audience target of 40,000 people in Northern Ireland. • Achieve high levels of audience satisfaction amongst those within the Northern Ireland audience who express a particular interest in Ulster-Scots. • Achieve general audience satisfaction levels consistent with those for other local programmes broadcast in Northern Ireland of a similar genre in a similar broadcast slot.

The objectives of the USBF are measured through: hours of programming delivered; percentage of broadcasts made within nine months of delivery; size of audience reached; and audience satisfaction. These are activity and output measures rather than outcome measures and examples of possible future outcome measures are set out below¹⁵:

- TV broadcasting hours;
- Audience reach;
- Ulster-Scots language programmes as a percentage of the broadcast time;
- Development of Ulster-Scots programmes that increase respect for Ulster-Scots language, culture and heritage (monitor survey results above baseline levels);
- Economic/ social benefits (numbers of people employed in the sector; numbers trained in media from Ulster-Scots sector); and
- Percentage increase in people from both communities understanding the Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture.

¹⁴ USBF Guidelines

¹⁵ Note: section 4 highlights how the Fund currently has not only delivered on its programming objectives but delivered wider impacts to date.

The outcome measures should be considered as part of any new Commissioning Strategy, recognising that the impact is limited by the funding available and commercial environments within which the broadcasters operate (see section 5).

3.5 The Ulster-Scots Language, Culture and Heritage

The aim of the USBF is to ensure that the language, culture and heritage of Ulster-Scots is expressed through moving image. There is evidence that there is growing awareness and respect for Ulster-Scots, as shown in the following tables. This cannot be directly linked to the USBF, but given the viewing figures (see section 4.5.1) it is likely that it is contributing to these results.

Language: The Ulster-Scots language is viewed differently by different groups, while some see it as a language in its own right others view it as a dialect of Scots. There are also native and revivalist speakers with different requirements from any Ulster-Scots Language programme.

However there is evidence of a growing interest in the Ulster-Scots language as the 2011 census reported that 8% of the population (140,204) had some ability in Ulster-Scots and the Continuous Household Survey¹⁶ for 2013/14 highlighted that 17% of respondents (n=3,744) had some knowledge of Ulster-Scots, an increase from 15% in 2011/12. Other key statistics are outlined in tables 3.4 and 3.5.

Table 3:2: Knowledge of Ulster-Scots in Northern Ireland (2011)

Persons aged 3 and over who:	Number	Percentage
Have some ability in Ulster-Scots	140,204	8
Have no ability in Ulster-Scots	1,595,507	92
Persons who have some knowledge of Ulster-Scots who:	Number	Percentage
Understand but cannot read, write or speak Ulster-Scots	92,040	5.3
Speak but do not read or write Ulster-Scots	10,265	0.59
Speak and read but do not write Ulster-Scots	7,801	0.45
Speak, read, write and understand Ulster-Scots	16,373	0.94
Other combination of skills	13,725	0.79

Source: 2011 Census

¹⁶ The Continuous Household Survey (CHS) is a Northern Ireland wide household survey administered by Central Survey Unit, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency. The 2013/14 survey was based on a random sample of 4,500 domestic addresses drawn from the Land and Property Services list of addresses and interviews were sought with all adults aged 16 and over in these households. The findings reported for 2013/14 are based on 3,753 respondents, aged 16 and over, who answered the languages module of the survey

Table 3:3: Ulster-Scots Language in Northern Ireland – 2013/14

Persons who:	2011/12		2013/14	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Have some knowledge of Ulster-Scots, (i.e. can understand, speak, read or write Ulster-Scots)	553	15%	636	17%
Understand Ulster-Scots	479	13%	562	15%
Speak Ulster-Scots	147	4%	225	6%
Read Ulster-Scots	111	3%	150	4%
Write Ulster-Scots	74	2%	37	1%
Use of Ulster-Scots (at home, conversing with family or housemates, either on a daily basis or occasionally)	184	5%	225	6%
Agree that Ulster-Scots is an important part of Northern Irish culture	N/A	N/A	1,544	42%

Source: Continuous Household Survey 2011/12 & 2013/14

N/A refers to information that was not available / reported on in the 2011/12 survey

Ulster-Scots Culture and Heritage: The Continuous Household Survey¹⁷ 2014/15 reported that 16% of adults were engaged with Ulster-Scots culture and heritage, an increase from 13% in the previous year and demonstrating a growing interest in this area.

3.6 Summary

The USBF was established as a result of political developments in Northern Ireland (specifically the Hillsborough Agreement). The Fund is still needed as:

- although the main Broadcaster in Northern Ireland (BBC) has Charter requirements to reflect and promote different cultures, it would not be able to broadcast current programmes supported through the Fund without this support; and

¹⁷ The Continuous Household Survey (CHS) is a Northern Ireland wide household survey administered by Central Survey Unit, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency. The sample for this survey in 2014/15 consisted of a systematic random sample of 4,500 addresses selected from the Land and Property Service's list of private addresses. The findings reported for 2014/15 are based on 3,344 respondents, aged 16 and over, who answered the Ulster-Scots module of the survey

- there is a need under The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages to promote minority languages/ safeguard culture and heritage.

The USBF was established at a time when the Ulster-Scots sector was still in its infancy and its aims, objectives and outcomes could now be further developed.

4 PROJECT ACTIVITY SUPPORTED BY THE USBF

4.1 Introduction

This section presents an overview of the projects supported by the USBF over the period of this evaluation (March 2011 to March 2016). This section contains analysis of:

- The number of projects supported and levels of USBF investment made;
- Production companies and genres supported;
- Translation of funding into broadcasting activity; and
- Value for Money indicators, including cost per minute broadcast and evidence of compliance with the funding parameters set, match funding and levels of spend in Northern Ireland.

4.2 Projects Supported & Investments Made

The table below outlines a summary of applications received from each call to date (2011 – 2016).

Table 4.1: Applications Received by Northern Ireland Screen 2011 - 2016¹⁸

Call	Applications per round	No. successful (N, % of total)	Amount of funding awarded
1st Call – March 2011	11	6 (55%)	£648,750
2nd Call – May 2011	10	3 (30%)	£285,450
3rd Call - December 2011	4	2 (50%)	£309,250
4th Call - March 2012	6	6 (100%)	£352,533
5th Call - May 2012	7	5 (71%)	£733,733
6th Call - October 2012	4	3 (75%)	£405,000
7th Call - February 2013	2	2 (100%)	£153,000 ¹⁹
8th Call - May 2013	2	1 (50%)	£73,275
9th Call - July 2013	2	0 (0%)	£0
10th Call – November 2013	7	6 (86%)	£815,764 ²⁰

¹⁸ Fluctuations are based on an uneven volume of programmes broadcast across the years

¹⁹ Please note one of the two projects was supported but the level of award (£71,250) was confirmed/approved in the 10th call, therefore it has been omitted from here

²⁰ Including £71,250 from an application that was supported in the 7th call, but the amount was approved in the 10th call.

Call	Applications per round	No. successful (N, % of total)	Amount of funding awarded
11th Call - July 2014	6	4 (67%)	£318,000
12th Call - December 2014	5	3 (60%)	£303,465
13th Call - June 2015	8	3 (37%)	£484,500
14th Call - January 2016	5	4 (80%)	£439,375
Outside of a call ²¹	4	4 (100%)	£ 299,875
Total	83	52 (63%)	£5,621,970

Source: USBF Summary of Application – Successful and Rejected (Provided to PACEC by Northern Ireland Screen - March 2016)

In total the USBF provided a total of £5,621,970 to 52 projects, an average of £108,115 of funding per supported project.

4.2.1 Match Funding

The USBF guidelines state that “the USBF will provide a maximum of 75% of the overall agreed project costs. Where the USBF is investing 75% of the overall agreed project costs, the broadcaster must provide the balancing 25%”. A review of the 52 projects funded by the USBF found that match funding was provided in each case, with the USBF contribution ranging from 48 – 75% of the total project budget and the broadcaster contribution totaling £2,525,390.²² Therefore, across the 52 projects supported, £0.44 was leveraged for every £1 of USBF monies spent.

4.2.2 Levels of Spend in Northern Ireland

The USBF guidelines state that “where the aid intensity is 75%, at least 70% of costs must be spent in Northern Ireland. Where the aid intensity is at a lower level, the percentage spend in Northern Ireland must be equivalent to the percentage aid intensity, for example if the aid intensity is 50%, at least 50% of costs must be spent in Northern Ireland”. A review of the 13th and 14th call applications found that for each of the funded projects the anticipated spend in Northern Ireland was equal to or greater than the funding requested from the USBF, as outlined in table 4.2.

²¹ Any applications received and reviewed outside of a round are time sensitive e.g. they need to film in a specific time period to capture the subject matter. For example, the Belfast tattoo is held in September.

²² USBF Cashflow of Projects – provided by Northern Ireland Screen to PACEC March 2016

Table 4:2: Amount Requested from USBF and Projected Spend in NI – 13th and 14th Calls

	Amount requested from USBF (%)	Projected spend in NI (%)
13th Call – June 2015		
A Woman Called Nesca	75	100
Brave New World: USA	75	83
Wayfaring Strangers	75	83
14th Call – January 2016		
A Special Relationship	75	88
Paul and Nick's Big Canadian Food Trip	52.4	76.3
Languages of Ulster	75	94.1
Northern Visions Ulster-Scots Proposal	75	97

Source: Northern Ireland Screen Assessment Forms – 13th and 14th Calls

4.3 Projects Supported

In total 52 projects were commissioned by the USBF from March 2011 – March 2016; table 4.3 outlines the breakdown of these by genre and table 4.4 details the number of projects funded for each broadcaster.

Table 4:3 USBF Commissions by Genre and Year (March 2011 – March 2016)

Genre	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	Total
Factual/ Entertainment	1	4	5	2	3	4	19
Documentary	2	5	1	2	2	2	14
Music	2	0	1	0	2	1	6
Magazine	1	0	1	1	0	1	4
Language - Factual	0	1	0	0	1	1	3
Language - Drama	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Language - development	0	0	0	0	0	1	1

Genre	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	Total
Interactive Content	0	1	0	1	0	1	3
Animation	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total	6	11	9	7	8	11	52

Source: USBF List of Projects, provided to PACEC by Northern Ireland Screen – May 2016

Table 4:4 Commissions per year by broadcaster (March 2011 – March 2016)

Broadcaster	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	Total
BBC NI	5	10	6	5	7	8	41
UTV	1	0	2	0	0	0	3
UTV/STV	0	0	0	1	1	1	3
NVTV	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
RTE	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
N/A	0	1	0	1	0	1	3
Total	6	11	9	7	8	11	52

Source: USBF Summary of Applications, provided to PACEC by Northern Ireland Screen – March 2016

The USBF is heavily dependent on the BBC as a broadcaster as 79% of the projects funded by the USBF are broadcast by the BBC. In addition, there is a significant focus on the factual/entertainment and documentary genre which represent 37% and 27% respectively of programmes funded by the USBF and therefore there is a need to widen the range of programmes being supported.

4.4 Progress against Targets

Table 4.5 details the extent to which the USBF has performed against its target KPIs from 2011/12 – 2015/16. Further details on progress against specific objectives and targets is provided in appendix B.

Table 4:5: Performance Against Target KPIs 2011/12 – 2015/16

Year	Number of KPIs	Percentage of KPIs Met	KPIs not met	Evidence of KPIs not met
2011/12	4	75%	One KPI was not met: “Deliver 20 additional hours of Ulster-Scots programming”	Commissioned 12 hours of Ulster-Scots television programming and an additional unquantifiable number of digital content hours
2012/13	6	100%	-	-
2013/14	5	100%	-	-
2014/15	6	66.7%	The following two KPIs were not met: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commission 12 additional hours of Ulster-Scots programming 1 programme to receive an international broadcast 	The following two KPIs were not met: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commissioned 10 hours of Ulster-Scots programming to date during this period. There has been no programming broadcast internationally.
2015/16	6	100%	-	-

Source: USBF Investment Plans 2012/13 – 2016/17 (see Appendix B)

An assessment of performance against targets for 2011/12 – 2015/16 indicates that:

- In 2011/12 all targets were met with the exception of ‘20 additional hours of Ulster-Scots programming’ (12 hours of programming commissioned);
- In 2012/13 all targets were met;
- In 2013/14 all targets were met;
- In 2014/15 four of the six targets were met, there was no programming broadcast internationally and only 10 hours of programming was commissioned; and
- In 2015/16 all targets were met.

The performance in 2014/15 reflects the lead time involved in getting some of the projects developed and therefore why the target was exceeded in 2015/16.

4.5 Value for Money (VFM) Indicators

4.5.1 Cost per minute

There is no target cost per minute for the USBF however cost per minute is a rough indicator and cannot be looked at in isolation from other issues such as type of project and quality of content when considering VFM. The cost per minute achieved for the USBF (up to March 2016 based on

52 projects) was £1,107.59, however it is noted that the TG4 tariff is lower than the BBC tariff.

The tables 4.6 – 4.8 provide further details of the cost per minute by year, genre, broadcaster and funding round for the USBF.

Table 4:6 USBF Average Cost per Minute by Year and Genre (March 2011 to March 2016)²³

Genre	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	Total
Factual / Entertainment (n=19)	£1,041.67	£1,166.89	£1,148.38	£825.39	£1,302.11	£1,133.02	£1,133.70
Documentary (n=14)	£1,354.17	£1,335.13	£1,500.00	£1,250.00	£1,375.00	£1,187.50	£1,322.07
Music (n=6)	£937.50	-	£1,125.00	-	£1,062.50	£1,500.00	£1,104.17
Magazine (n=4)	£875.00	-	£875.00	£916.67	-	-	£888.89
Language – Factual (n=3)	-	£1,498.83	-	-	£1,062.50	£1,250.00	£1,270.44
Language – Drama (n=1)	-	-	-	£2,442.50	-	-	£2,442.50
Language – development (n=1)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Interactive Content (n=3)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Animation (n=1)	-	-	£2,000.00	-	-	-	£2,000.00
Total	£1,083.33	£1,284.20	£1,249.10	£1,251.66	£1,230.48	£1,207.13	£1,107.59

Source: USBF Cashflow Spreadsheet Provided to PACEC by Northern Ireland Screen – March 2016

²³ To calculate these values the average of the cost per minute to the USBF was calculated for each year and genre to give the values in the Year columns. The Total column was then calculated based on the overall average cost per minute to the USBF of each genre in a given year by summing the overall cost per minute and dividing this by the overall number of projects funded in this genre.

Table 4.6 indicates that:

- Language Drama and Animation were the most expensive genres to support (however this relates to only one project in each category for the USBF and therefore definitive conclusions cannot be drawn);
- Documentaries were the 3rd most expensive genre (based on 14 projects); and
- Of those that are applicable, the magazine genre is the lowest cost per minute at an average of £888.89 per minute.

Table 4:7 USBF Average Cost per Minute by Year and Broadcaster (March 2011 to March 2016)

Broadcaster	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	Total
BBC NI (n=41)	£1,091.67	£1,284.20	£1,295.83	£1,310.72	£1,269.64	£1,255.36	£1,226.93
UTV (n=3)	£1,041.67		£1,259.94				£1,187.18
UTV/STV (n=3)				£956.33	£956.33	£869.57	£927.41
NVTV (n=1)							£0.00
RTE (n=1)			£947.02				£947.02
N/A ²⁴ (n=3)							£0.00
Total	£1,083.33	£1,167.46	£1,249.10	£1,072.85	£1,230.48	£877.92	£1,107.59

Source: USBF Cashflow Spreadsheet Provided to PACEC by Northern Ireland Screen – March 2016

Examination of the cost per minute by broadcaster is dependent on the type of programme, however table 4.7 highlights that:

- BBC NI has the highest cost per minute based on 41 programmes, followed by UTV (n=3 programmes) and RTE (n=1 programmes); and
- UTV/STV is the lowest cost per minute – at an average of £927.41 per minute (n=3 programmes).

However the figures for UTV, UTV/STV and RTE relate to a relatively small number of productions (n=3) and therefore definitive conclusions cannot be drawn.

²⁴ These productions were digital content and therefore did not have a broadcaster

Table 4:8 USBF Average Cost per Minute by Funding Round (March 2011 to March 2016)

Funding Round	Average Cost Per Minute (£) ²⁵
2011	
1st Call -March	1,083
2nd Call - May	1,308
3rd Call – December ²⁶	1,646
2012	
4th Call - March	1,212
5th Call - May	1,093
6th Call – October	1,500
2013	
7th Call – Feb	1,275
8th Call – May	2,443
9th Call – July	0
10th Call – November	1,013
2014	
11th Call - July	1,316
Outside of Call - October	1,500
12th Call – December	1,027
2015	
Outside of Call - April	1,125
13th Call - June	1,408
Outside of Call – August 2015	1,000
Outside of Call – November 2015 ²⁷	N/A
2016	
14th Call – January	1,102

Source: USBF Cashflow – List of projects for VFM, Provided to PACEC by Northern Ireland Screen – March 2016

²⁵ This was calculated by summing the cost per minute to the USBF of each project across the calls and dividing this by the total number of projects funded under that call.

²⁶ One project funded under this call was for digital content so this project does not have an average cost per minute to the USBF. This project was therefore not considered when calculating the average cost per minute.

²⁷ The project at this stage was developmental and so not applicable to average cost to USBF per minute.

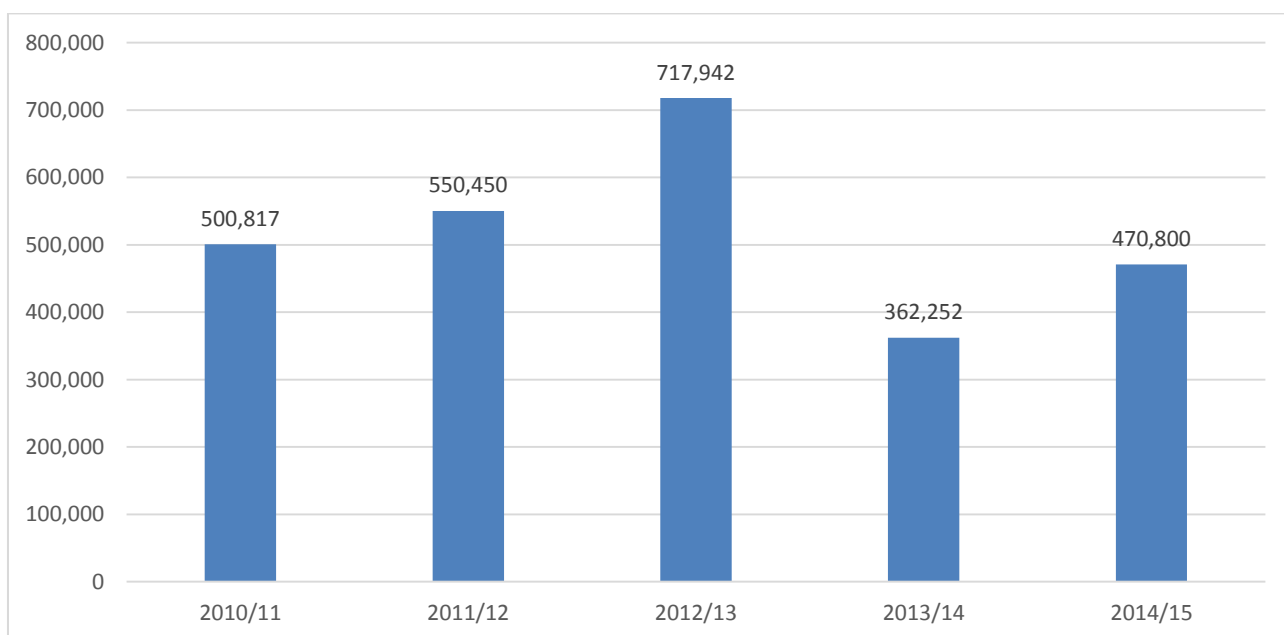
Table 4.8 indicates that the cost per minute²⁸ to the USBF has remained consistent at between £1,000 and £1,500 under each call with the exception of:

- The 8th Call (May 2013) which had the highest cost per minute of £2,443; however only one production was funded under this call (Stumpy’s Brae, this was the only drama funded by the USBF and the most expensive genre); and
- The 3rd Call (December 2011) had an average cost per minute of £1,646 (across two projects, one of which was a project involving Digital Content and did not have an average cost per minute).

4.5.2 Audience Data

The USBF has a target to “reach a significant Northern Ireland audience, primarily but not exclusively through broadcast television, with an initial audience target of 40,000²⁹ people in Northern Ireland”. Figure 4.1 indicates that this target has been exceeded each year by a significant amount.

Figure 4:1 Audience Numbers by Year (based on the year the project was awarded: 2011/12 – 2015/16, BBC Audience Figures)



Source: USBF Audience Information - data received from Northern Ireland Screen, May 2016

Figure 4.1 shows that BBC productions funded by the USBF have had a total audience of 2,602,261, with the highest figures in 2012/13 (717,942).

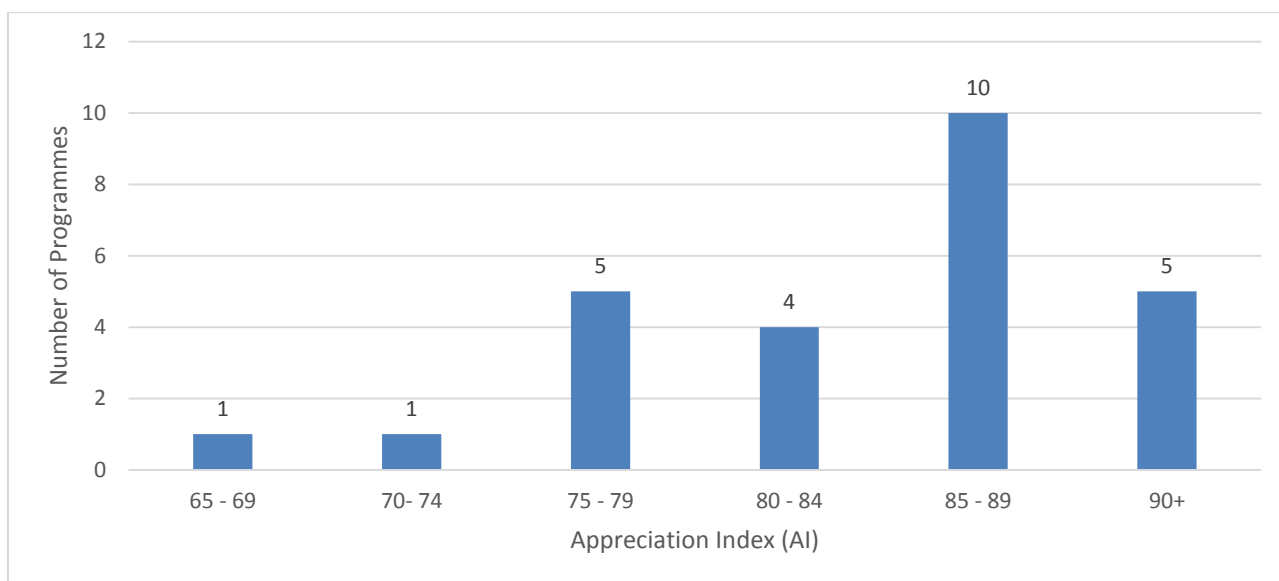
²⁸ This was calculated by summing the cost per minute to the USBF of each project across the calls and dividing this by the total number of projects funded under that call.

²⁹ Original target was 25,000 in 2011/12

4.5.3 Audience Appreciation

Audience appreciation is based on BBC Appreciation Index (AI) scores³⁰ for programmes funded by the USBF. These relate to scores out of 100 and is used to gauge an audience’s appreciation of a programme/series/strand. The following figure details the number of programmes with an Appreciation Index score of 65 and above.

Figure 4:2 BBC Audience Appreciation figures for USBF / BBC funded programmes (2011 – 2016)



Source: USBF Audience Information for Evaluation – Received from Northern Ireland Screen, May 2016

Figure 4.2. shows that of the programmes rated (n=26) 58% achieved a score of 85 or over, which is considered excellent and 19% of these achieved a score of over 90. This suggests high general audience satisfaction levels, however it is noted that in some instance the sample sizes for the USBF projects were low and AI figures were not available for UTV / STV / RTE projects.

4.6 Summary

In total 52 projects were funded during March 2011 – March 2016, representing £5,621,970 of USBF investment. Match funding was provided for each of the USBF funded projects during March 2011 – March 2016, with the USBF contribution ranging from 48 – 75% of the total project budget and the broadcaster contribution totaling £2,525,390. In addition, a review of the 13th and 14th call applications found that for each of the funded projects the anticipated spend in Northern Ireland was equal to or greater than the funding requested from the USBF and is therefore in line with USBF guidance.

³⁰ A score out of 100 given to BBC services by an independently run panel

Overall the Fund has performed well against its targets in each year from 2011/12 – 2015/16, meeting 100% of its KPIs in three of the five years (met 75% of its KPIs in 2011/12 and 67% in 2014/15).

The objectives of the USBF, as outlined in the USBF priorities are to:

- Deliver 12 additional hours of Ulster-Scots programming per annum in a range of genres conducive to the delivery of the heritage, culture and language aim;
- Broadcast 90% of the USBF funded programming within 9 months of delivery;
- Reach a significant Northern Ireland audience, primarily but not exclusively through broadcast television, with an initial audience target of 40,000 people in Northern Ireland;
- Achieve high levels of audience satisfaction amongst those within the Northern Ireland audience who express a particular interest in Ulster-Scots; and
- Achieve general audience satisfaction levels consistent with those for other local programmes broadcast in Northern Ireland of a similar genre in a similar broadcast slot.

The first three objectives are KPIs for the Fund and have mostly been met and Audience Index data for USBF funded programmes broadcast on the BBC indicates high levels of satisfaction / appreciation, with 58% of the 26 rated programmes achieving a score of 85 or over. A review of the range, content and subject matter of funded projects has shown that while a range of genres have been funded, there is a high concentration of factual entertainment and documentaries, and therefore scope for a wider variety of projects to be funded in the future.

Feedback from both production companies, broadcasters and other key stakeholders highlight the positive impact of the Fund, for example seven production companies (64%) reported increased employment as a result of involvement with the USBF and 67% stated that involvement with the USBF had increased company turnover. In addition, feedback from the Investment Committee highlighted that most USBF funded programmes have achieved high viewing figures as well as providing tangible cultural benefits and making Ulster-Scots programmes more accessible to the wider community (see section 5).

A total of 16 production companies were supported across a number of genres (factual/entertainment (37%), documentary (27%), music (12%), magazine (8%), interactive content (6%), language – factual (6%), language – development (2%), language – drama (2%), animation (2%)) and as a result 85.8 hours of Ulster-Scots programming was broadcast. The cost per minute achieved (from March 2011-March 2016 based on 52 projects) was £1,107.59.

5 CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

5.1 Introduction

This section summarises the key findings from consultees (see appendix A for list of consultees and appendix C for the discussion guide).

5.2 Stakeholder Consultation Findings

5.2.1 How the Fund has developed over the last five years

Consultees felt the Fund had developed since it was established, for example processes are now in place for receiving and assessing applications, providing feedback to production companies and the Investment Committee felt their skills and confidence had developed significantly. However, it was recognised that there were gaps in their experience, expertise and confidence at the outset which had impacted on the funding decisions.

Investment Committee members felt they now had greater credibility with TV production companies, and that the process of providing them with feedback had been significantly developed over the period, in particular some Investment Committee members meet directly production companies to explain their feedback and ensure it is fully understood by them. As a result, it was believed that applications from production companies have improved, however there remains scope for further development. The Mackin Report (see 5.2.5) was welcomed by members and its recommendations regarding:

- the need for Production Companies to use Ulster-Scots Specialists/ Advisors/ Academics in the development of programme content; and
- the BBC should appoint an Executive Producer with Ulster-Scots knowledge/ expertise to oversee Ulster-Scots funded programmes. Both actions were felt to be significant developments if actioned in improving the quality of programming content further (*it is understood that the BBC is moving ahead with this recommendation*³¹)

Members noted that 3-4 production companies in receipt of funding had developed their knowledge and skills of Ulster-Scots over the last 5 years and could be relied on to deliver quality product, highlighting the Awards (such as Royal Television Society (RTS) NI awards) that Ulster-Scots programmes supported through the Fund had gained. This was also felt to be a significant impact for the Fund, given the lack of Ulster-Scots TV production expertise when the Fund was first established.

The USBF require that Ulster-Scots experts are used in productions as a condition of funding and the extent of their involvement has improved over time. One interviewee with an advisory role on some of the funded productions noted that he was now being ‘used properly’ by production companies, whereas ‘*in the past [his] name could have gone into proposals and he would never hear*

³¹ Telephone call with Northern Ireland Screen 25th May 2016

of the work until the final stage'. However the extent of their involvement was highlighted as a continuing area for development.

The process used to make decisions on applications for funding is set out in section 6.3.3, and feedback from Investment Committee members confirmed:

- Summaries of projects are sent out in advance with an assessment against priorities having been completed by Northern Ireland Screen;
- Summaries are fully discussed at Investment Committee meetings by the members present (however some members noted past applications were not discussed as fully as they would have preferred);
- Current Investment Committee meetings work well and most felt that all members engage effectively and that the decisions reached reflect the issues raised; and
- While in previous years some issues raised by members were not always incorporated into the letters of offer to production companies (resulting in issues raised by members not always being fully actioned), this has improved with the Chair or an Investment Committee Member meeting the Production Company to discuss any issues.

However it was also noted by representatives from the Ulster-Scots community that there should be greater openness and accountability in relation to how funding decisions were reached and that Investment Committee meeting minutes should be in the public domain / placed online.

Committee members felt there was a need to have a Programming Strategy in order to:

- Ensure there is a balance of programmes across Ulster-Scots language, culture and/or heritage over the strategy period;
- Encourage production companies and broadcasters to take a longer term view and be more innovative in the concepts they come forward with whilst ensuring they fit with the Strategy priorities;
- Be clear on how a wider range of genres could be supported;
- Take in account key Ulster-Scots commemorations/anniversaries over the next 2-3 years and support the telling of local stories that demonstrate the Ulster-Scots language/ culture and heritage;
- Clarify how the Ulster-Scots language should be considered; and
- Set out the outcomes to be achieved through the Fund.

Representatives from the wider Ulster–Scots community felt that the quality of the funded programmes had improved since the USBF was established and programmes such as ‘An Independent People’ were highlighted as being particularly good examples of high quality work.

However, interviewees also emphasised that there was a need for high quality Ulster-Scots documentaries, such as the BBC ‘Shaping the Coast’ programme, which sets out real stories about Ulster-Scots culture, language and heritage. In addition, feedback also included that there should be a greater focus on language content, suggesting that some of the funded programmes had poor language content or “brushed past” the language aspect.

It was also felt that there is a need to train/develop more Ulster-Scots presenters to avoid the same presenters being used repeatedly.

5.2.2 The inter-relationship between broadcasters and committee decisions

The relationship between the Investment Committee and UTV is much less developed (in comparison to the relationship between the Investment Committee and the BBC). Committee members stated they would like to see UTV broadcast more Ulster-Scots programmes, however UTV is clear it has a limited opportunity to do so as it has to serve all the communities in Northern Ireland and UTV only has 2 hours per week of regional non-news output and any programme broadcast needs to have viewer numbers that will outperform the national programme that it would replace. The UTV representative felt that Investment Committee members have in the past undervalued the programmes that UTV broadcast (i.e. they are more of the mainstream and populist variety rather than the documentaries the Fund focuses on), however UTV generates large local audiences. The Paul and Nick Big Food Trip programme is an example of the type of programme that has been broadcast and extends the reach of the Fund and the awareness of Ulster-Scots heritage - receiving high local viewing figures and also picked up by STV and shown in Scotland.

STV welcomed the work of the Fund in supporting the Paul and Nick Big Food Trip programme and stressed that it supported the production of a high quality programme which portrays a positive image of Northern Ireland and has high viewing figures in Scotland. The representative also noted that it is a programme that STV could not afford to broadcast without the Fund.

5.2.3 Assessment of Impact to Date

The consultees interviewed felt the Fund had delivered a positive impact to date, however some members felt that more could potentially be achieved. Feedback on the impact to date includes:

- Viewing figures have been strong, even for those programmes with more specialist content;
- Some of the programmes/series have been award-winning and have attracted critical acclaim;
- BBC commissioning priorities in this area have been adjusted over time to take account of USBF Investment Committee feedback, emerging gaps and opportunities;
- USBF support has increased the volume, visibility and impact of television programming in/about Ulster-Scots – with much of this content being broadcast in BBC prime slots and for a mainstream audience. It has also, amongst other things, facilitated a major co-production with BBC Scotland – something that the Investment Committee had named as a key objective;
- Independent production companies have engaged seriously with the USBF and Ulster-Scots. They have brought creativity and editorial ambition to their work and have delivered programmes of a generally high-standard; and
- Some of the USBF supported output has been exceptional and will have a long legacy. It has also provided tangible cultural benefits by “*challenging misconceptions, celebrating past achievements and contemporary Ulster-Scots’ experiences and making them more generally accessible and some of this output has been innovative, in terms of subject matter and approach*”.

- The USBF has attempted to bridge the gap between academic research, sectoral enthusiasms and the needs/interests of the wider community. While it was recognised that not everything had succeeded, it was highlighted that *“any short-comings should be viewed in context, and relative to whole, and taking account of the new-ness of the Fund and the fact that creative ventures (and in particular, those that are attempting fresh and different approaches, rather than simple re-working of existing stories and formats) will involve some element of risk and uncertainty that no amount of process or editorial scrutiny can entirely mitigate”*.

5.2.4 Future Opportunities

All consultees felt the Fund had a number of future opportunities that could be developed and taken forward. The opportunities varied by stakeholders and are detailed below in no specific order:

- The Fund should be used to create employment and develop TV production/ presenter skills in the local Ulster-Scots sector and consideration should be given to the feasibility of an apprenticeship scheme for younger people to be trained and get experience in these areas;
- The Fund should be broadened outside of TV to include enhanced digital (online) content and radio in order to widen the routes to attracting audiences not only in Northern Ireland/ Ireland but further afield (it was suggested that this could also include the production of DVDs); and
- The size of the USBF should be increased so there is parity of support with the Irish Language Broadcast Fund.

5.2.5 Towards a new BBC editorial strategy for Ulster-Scots (Maureen Mackin Consulting, 2016)

This report³² presents the findings of a research exercise carried out on BBC NI Ulster-Scots output between July – December 2015 involving both desk research and consultation with BBC staff. Key findings of relevance to this review include:

- The BBC NI did not have an in-house specialist in relation to Ulster-Scots at an operational and programming level, compared to the dedicated specialist team for the Irish language;
- While it was recognised that the USBF had made a significant contribution to the way in which Ulster-Scots culture and heritage has been presented and received, it was suggested there was a need for better communication between Ulster-Scots specialists, the BBC and the independent sector in order to ensure that content and style were authentic, relevant and up to date; and
- In some instances, there was insufficient Ulster-Scots content in programmes funded by the USBF and opportunities had been missed.

The review recommended that professional in-house expertise in Ulster-Scots at an operational and programming level was essential and this would facilitate corporate in-house leadership and provide a focus for potential opportunities and collaborations. It also recommended that extending the remit of the USBF to include enhanced radio and online provision be explored.

³² Maureen Mackin Consulting (2016) *Towards a new BBC editorial strategy for Ulster Scots*

5.3 Production Companies- Survey Feedback

This section sets out the findings from the survey carried out with production companies that had received funding in order to gather feedback on their experience of the USBF, including their understanding of Ulster-Scots programming and any difficulties they may have encountered (further details provided in appendix D).

Methodology

PACEC developed a draft questionnaire that was reviewed and agreed with Northern Ireland Screen and then piloted with three production companies. All 16 production companies that had received funding from 2011 – 2016 were invited to participate in a telephone interview and in total 15 interviews were completed (94% response rate).

Survey Findings

Awareness and Understanding of the USBF

Feedback from production companies highlights a strong understanding of the role and function of the USBF as 80% of respondents (n=12) stated the role and function of the USBF was to fund Ulster-Scots broadcasting in Northern Ireland, to promote awareness of Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture, and to foster the Ulster-Scots independent sector in Northern Ireland.

Process – application, assessment and production

The majority of production companies stated they were satisfied or very satisfied with the application process (67%) and the assessment process (71%), noting that this was straightforward / more streamlined than when the Fund was first established, and there was now good communication from Northern Ireland Screen and the Investment Committee on the status / progress of their application. This compares favourably with benchmark funds (see section 7), in particular the Sound and Vision Scheme in the Republic of Ireland as while this has a more rigorous application and assessment process³³ the evaluation report³⁴ highlighted that this was overly complicated and resource intensive. Of the 27% that were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied, reasons included a perceived disparity between the objectives / targets of the USBF and what the broadcasters are willing to support, difficulty in finding a suitably skilled Ulster-Scots advisor and that overall the application and assessment process was longer than originally anticipated.

³³ Specifically: a preliminary check-box assessment takes place to ensure the application meets the requirements in terms of the information supplied and the formats in which it is submitted, etc; following this, there are two sequential external assessments of the application: one assessor considers the application, and then this, along with the first assessor's opinion, is passed to a second assessor; here is an internal assessment by a BAI staff member; a collective decision is reached in discussions between the second external assessor, the internal assessor, and BAI officials; and in the case where the total funding applied for by approved projects exceeds the funds available in the round, a "strategic assessment" process takes place to select those projects that best adhere to the Scheme objectives

³⁴ Crowe Horwath (2013) *Statutory Review of the Sound and Vision Scheme*

In addition, respondents highlighted a lack of clarity on the type of projects that the USBF will support. Respondents were asked to rate on a scale of 0 to 10 how clear the content sought by the USBF was (where 0 was not clear and 10 was perfectly clear) and the average rating from 15 respondents was 4.87. Feedback included that the criteria should include more specific details on the genres that can be supported and include examples of the type of projects that would / have received funding. Moreover, it was suggested that there should be a greater degree of flexibility in programme content in order to attract more original ideas that are not solely focused on historical events and will also meet the needs of broadcasters such as UTV which require programmes that have a more popular appeal.

It was emphasised that the role of an Ulster-Scots advisor at the application stage was beneficial as they were able to provide feedback on production ideas, provide suggestions and direction to the project, review and confirm the factual accuracy of the proposed content, as well as helping to develop the script and proposal being submitted to the USBF. Overall, 75% of respondents suggested that the involvement of an Ulster-Scots advisor in both project development and production should be a requirement. Qualitative feedback included that the advisors input *“was very beneficial and a necessary part of the process. The consultant made sure the production was on message with the Fund and that the content was interesting and appealing.”*

Of the five production companies that had sought guidance / feedback from the Investment Committee at the application stage (prior to submitting an application) this was noted as being beneficial to understanding what the committee was looking for and how they would be assessed.

Benefits

Production companies highlighted a number of education / skill and economic impacts as a result of the USBF, these included:

- Education and skill development: seven production companies (64%) reported increased employment as a result of involvement with the USBF, five companies quantified this as 23 roles (eight of which are temporary/freelance) and also noted that 12 new staff are now skilled in Ulster-Scots (11 full-time and one freelance).
- Economic impacts: 67% of the 15 production companies stated that involvement with the USBF had increased company turnover. Of the six companies that provided details of the increase in turnover attributable to their involvement with the USBF, the average increase in turnover was 34%.

What worked well / areas for development

In total 67% of respondents were satisfied with their experience of the USBF, the main elements cited as working well and should be maintained are:

- Having an Ulster-Scots advisor involved from the outset of the project when the project is being developed through to the production stages;
- Meeting with the USBF committee to discuss the project idea prior to submitting an application to understand more fully what members would like to see included; and

- Having a streamlined application process, feedback highlighted that the timescales and communication from Northern Ireland Screen had improved in recent years and now worked well.

Identified areas for future development included:

- Greater flexibility on what the USBF will fund, specifically a lesser focus on historical documentaries and greater emphasis given to fictional / drama / animation and musical Ulster-Scots productions and programmes that reflect the social side of Ulster-Scots heritage;
- A better synergy between broadcaster priorities and USBF priorities / objectives; and
- Greater uniformity in the decisions / feedback from the Investment Committee, it was suggested that feedback can vary depending on the committee member and it can be difficult to take into account the differing needs of members while also aligning this with the needs / expectations of the broadcaster.

Future priority areas

Production companies were asked what the main priority areas, in terms of Ulster-Scots production supported by the Government, should be and why. A summary of the main responses includes:

- Expansion to include a wider range of programming as well as other formats such as audio and broadening of the online resources supported by the fund; and
- Training and skill development for production companies similar to the ILBF (feedback included a perceived lack of well-trained Ulster-Scots staff in the sector).

5.4 Summary

Feedback from key stakeholders indicates that the USBF has had a significant impact on the Ulster-Scots sector. The consultation with key stakeholders indicated that:

- The USBF has developed significantly over the past 5 years with regard to internal assessment processes and the skills/ expertise of both the Investment Committee Level and within production companies;
- The Fund has achieved strong viewing figures in primetime slots and the series / programmes funded have achieved critical acclaim;
- The Ulster-Scots content in programmes has needed and continues to need involvement of expert advisors and this is an area that the Investment Committee wish to see further developed;
- The appointment of an Executive Producer in the BBC with Ulster-Scots knowledge/ expertise will further increase the quality of programming content; and
- The involvement of UTV in broadcasting further Ulster-Scots programmes is important, however the relationship between the Investment Committee and UTV requires further development and recognition of the commercial reality the broadcaster operates under.

In addition, feedback from production companies highlighted:

- The positive economic impact of the Fund, for example seven production companies (64%) reported increased employment as a result of involvement with the USBF and 67% stated that involvement with the USBF had increased company turnover; and

- Satisfaction with their experience of the USBF (67% stated they were satisfied or very satisfied with the application process and 71% stated they were satisfied with the assessment process).

Overall the feedback suggests that the Fund has had a positive impact, however it also indicates a dependence on the USBF funding.

6 REVIEW OF FUND MANAGEMENT AND CONTROLS

6.1 Introduction

This section examines the USBF management process, the extent to which the specified selection criterion for the Fund was adhered to during the evaluation of applications and the transparency and consistency of the processes.

6.2 Fund Management

The USBF is managed by the Investment Committee and staff within Northern Ireland Screen.

6.2.1 Investment Committee

The Investment Committee of the USBF is a sub-committee of the Northern Ireland Screen Board which oversees the investments made by the USBF to ensure they are in line with guidance. Aligned to this, the Investment Committee is to ensure that appropriate procedures and associated monitoring and reporting measures are in place to allow them to report effectively to the Board, the BFI and to support the work of the USBF staff.³⁵

The terms of reference for the Investment Committee (see Appendix E) states that the purpose of the Investment Committee is to³⁶:

- Sanction all funding decisions relating to the USBF;
- Advise on how to maximise the effectiveness of the USBF in delivering against its objectives as stated in the USBF guidelines (which may vary by agreement of the Northern Ireland Screen Board in conjunction with the BFI);
- Act as the advisory panel to the Board with regard to all matters relating to Ulster-Scots;
- Deliver 12 additional hours of Ulster-Scots programming per annum in a range of genres conducive to the delivery of the heritage, culture and language aim; and
- Reach a significant Northern Ireland audience, primarily but not exclusively through broadcast television, with an initial audience target of 40,000 people in Northern Ireland.

Investment Committee Membership: The Investment Committee consists of one member of the Northern Ireland Screen Board who is the chair. The other members are a nominated member from BBC NI who represents broadcasting interests generally, a nominated member from the Ulster-Scots Agency and three independent representatives on behalf of the Ulster-Scots audience in Northern Ireland. It is important that the Ulster-Scots community is represented and we recommend that a community representative is included on the Investment Committee.

Each Investment Committee member is initially appointed for two years with eligibility for reappointment; as many of the committee members have now served over two years it is recommended that the Investment Committee is refreshed. A recruitment plan should be developed

³⁵ USBF Investment Committee Terms of Reference

³⁶ USBF Investment Committee Terms of Reference

for Investment Committee members whose terms have expired, however as this applies to all Investment Committee members it should happen in a phased way in order to ensure there is a mix of those with experience and new members. Members should have knowledge/ experience of Ulster-Scots language, culture and/or heritage and at least one committee member should have TV production/ broadcasting expertise. It is understood that previously it has been difficult recruit Investment Committee members from the Ulster-Scots community, therefore there is a need to raise awareness of the Fund, the benefits it brings and the vacancies on the committee once these are available. A briefing/ training session should be held once new committee members are appointed to cover the role of the committee; the learnings gained; the impact the USBF is expecting to deliver; and the strategy in place to deliver these.

Information provided to the Investment Committee: the papers distributed to the Investment Committee in advance of meetings include:

- Agenda;
- Minutes from previous meeting;
- Miscellaneous reports as required by the Investment Committee;
- Assessments for funding; and
- Financial update.

Based on the information provided the Investment Committee can decide to recommend³⁷:

- An award of funding with specific conditions / subject to ‘budget approval’;
- A rejection of an application; or
- A deferral of an application to another meeting.

A review of the Investment Committee Minutes for 2012 – 2016 highlight that there is no summary of the actions agreed at each meeting or details of who is responsible for addressing them / by when. These should be detailed at the end of each set of meeting minutes and each Investment Committee meeting should commence with a review of progress against actions to ensure they have been addressed.

6.2.2 Northern Ireland Screen Resources

The USBF is administered by Northern Ireland Screen and the CEO of Northern Ireland Screen is the relevant Accounting Officer. Staff resources within Northern Ireland Screen involved in the USBF are the CEO, Director of Finance and Corporate Services and the Funding Manager.

The total budget for overheads in 2015/16 was £69,706 (this includes an allocation of time from Northern Ireland Screen staff to administer the Fund) and actual spend was £69,706.³⁸ This equates to 7% of the £1 million per annum funding provided through the BFI from DCMS, therefore well below the norm of approx. 10% allocated to staff/ overheads on funded programmes.

³⁷ USBF Manual – Decision Stage

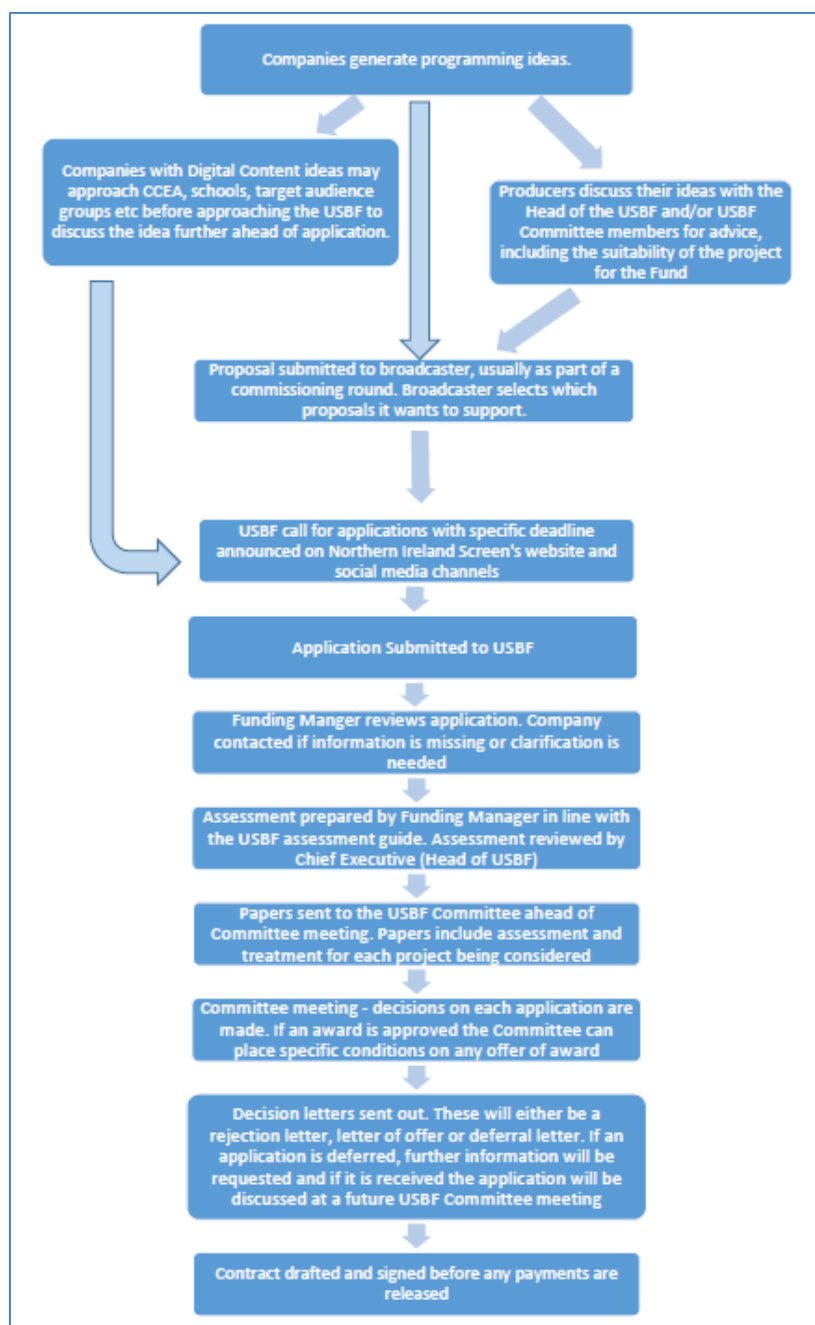
³⁸ USBF Investment Plan 2016/17

6.3 Project Management and Controls

6.3.1 Process Overview

An overview of the process followed to develop, assess and award funding is provided in figure 6.1.

Figure 6.1: Overview of the USBF Process



Source: USBF Application Process (provided by Northern Ireland Screen Mach 2016)

6.3.2 Call for Proposals

Northern Ireland Screen completes at least two calls a year for applications and more if required. The calls are set to coincide with BBC NI's commissioning rounds as they are the main broadcaster. To date (March 2016) there have been 14 funding rounds and a total of 83 applications received (see section 4.2).

6.3.3 Application and Assessment Process

The commissioning process includes a number of key stages; these are:

- Stage 1: Investment Committee produces a list of 'Priorities' for the USBF, indicating the genres of programming and themes that the USBF is most interested in funding
- Stage 2: Production companies submit a proposal to a broadcaster (usually as part of a commissioning round) and the broadcaster selects which proposals it wishes to support
- Stage 3: Following confirmation from a broadcaster on commissioning the production company can apply to the USBF
- Stage 4: The Northern Ireland Screen Funding Manager reviews the application and the production company is contacted if further information is required. An assessment is then prepared by the Funding Manager in line with USBF assessment guidance and which is reviewed by the CEO of Northern Ireland Screen. This includes project details, an overview of the proposal and assessment against each of the following criteria:
 - Complies with priorities
 - Contribution to the status/promotion of Ulster-Scots heritage, culture and language
 - Quality of the proposal
 - Audience appeal
 - Value for money/maximising the USBF's resources
 - Accessibility within the broadcaster's schedule/maximising audience access
 - Additional to current Ulster-Scots programming by the attached broadcaster
 - Contribution to the general Northern Ireland Screen strategy

The assessment also includes a recommendation by Northern Ireland Screen on whether the project should be funded.

- Stage 5: The Investment Committee reviews the papers provided by Northern Ireland Screen (assessment and treatment for each project) and makes a decision on whether to approve the application; approve it with conditions or reject it with details as how it could be improved
- Stage 6: Decision letters are sent out by Northern Ireland Screen (these will either be a rejection letter, letter of offer or deferral letter)

Companies with digital content ideas have approached CCEA, schools, target audience groups etc. before approaching the USBF to discuss the idea further ahead of application.

It is understood from interviews with the Investment Committee that members play an active role in the assessment process at Investment Committee meetings. Investment Committee members also provide guidance to production companies to help further develop their concept if issues are

identified during the assessment process. For example, the DoubleBand production Brave New World was funded as part of the 7th Call in February 2013; Investment Committee minutes³⁹ indicate that on first reviewing the application, members felt that recalibration of the treatment was needed to ensure accurate content was included and to maximise the Ulster-Scots potential within the series. A funding offer was made with the conditions that: the Chair and CEO meet with DoubleBand to discuss a re-worked proposal that would then be circulated to the Investment Committee; that guidance was provided to DoubleBand on what the key themes were and that a series consultant and / or New Zealand historian would be involved in the project. These conditions were incorporated into the letter of offer.

In addition, the Investment Committee agreed to fund the Northern Visions project (February 2016) with the specific conditions⁴⁰ that Northern Visions agree the participants and events to be featured with the Ulster-Scots Agency at monthly meetings, and the content reviewed halfway through the broadcast period, with the USBF Investment Committee retaining the right to terminate the funding if they were unhappy with the content being produced. This was included in the Letter of Offer as well as the stipulation that the producer engage the services of an Ulster-Scots consultant.

6.3.4 Monitoring

The monitoring process conducted by Northern Ireland Screen involves:

- Dialogue with the production company throughout the life of the project;
- A specific committee member with a particular interest in the content may engage with the company during the research stage or edit (if required); and
- Review of the final report and financial documentation provided by the production company at the final delivery stage. This outlines delivery against the USBF contract and reasons for any variances and spend against budget (and specifically spend in Northern Ireland during pre-production, production and post production relating to personnel employed – amount and percentage of total budget).

A review of Investment Committee meeting minutes has identified concerns raised by some members regarding the content of specific programmes. For example, concerns regarding the language content of “Stumpy’s Brae” (funded in 2013) were initially raised at the assessment stage. This project was supported subject to a redraft to ensure the Ulster-Scots language was accurately presented⁴¹ and the letter of offer was conditional on receipt of a full script / treatment for the programme (although the Letter of Offer did not specifically detail any conditions reference language content). While subsequent minutes noted that one Investment Committee member would consult with producers regarding the script before production began, Investment Committee meeting minutes following production highlighted disappointment with the linguistic accuracy of the production and noted that the Ulster-Scots content was limited and sometimes incorrect.⁴² The lack of action points in Investment Committee meeting minutes means it is difficult to track whether the

³⁹ Minutes of the Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund Investment Committee Meeting – Thursday 14 February 2013

⁴⁰ Minutes of the Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund Investment Committee Meeting – Thursday 28 January 2016

⁴¹ Minutes of the Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund Investment Committee Meeting – Thursday 9 May 2013

⁴² Minutes of the Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund Investment Committee Meeting – Wednesday 13 November 2013

planned actions where completed in this instance. It is also important that the Letters of Offer include specific conditions which reflect the concerns of Investment Committee members. However, this is one example from the 52 projects funded over the period 2011 – 2016 and therefore not a significant problem. In addition, as highlighted in section 5, consultation with Investment Committee members highlight that it was a more significant issue in the early years of the Fund than it is currently.

6.4 Completeness Assessment

The tables in this section summarise a review of the assessment process carried out by Northern Ireland Screen of 9 projects that were awarded funding and 5 projects that were not from the two most recent funding calls (13th and 14th funding rounds).⁴³

A completeness assessment was carried out by reviewing the Northern Ireland Screen assessment forms for the 13th and 14th funding rounds to determine if all applications were reviewed against the criteria outlined in the USBF Assessment Guide, as detailed in tables 6.1 – 6.4.

Key:		Not covered		Partially covered		Fully covered
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⁴³ It was agreed at the PID meeting that focusing on the two of the more recent call for applications would be the most useful approach.

6.4.1 Successful Applications

Table 6:1: Assessment by Northern Ireland Screen of Successful Applications - 13th Call

	Application Number					Details
	1	2	3	4	5	
Selection Criteria						
Compliance with the Priorities.						Assessment conducted based on the project proposal, however evidence of compliance with specific priorities is not listed as part of the assessment process.
Contribution to the status/promotion of the Ulster-Scots heritage, culture and language.						Assessment conducted based on the project proposal, however contribution to the status/promotion of the Ulster-Scots heritage, culture and language is not listed as part of the assessment process.
Quality of the proposal and audience appeal.						Assessment conducted based on the audience envisaged and why project would appeal to this audience included as part of the application for each project
Value for money/maximising USBF resources.						Assessment conducted based on the costs involved indicated as part of the application form
Accessibility within the broadcaster's schedule/maximising audience access.	N/A ⁴⁴					Assessment conducted based on the broadcaster and broadcast time indicated as part of the application
Contribution to the growth and development of the Ulster-Scots independent production sector in Northern Ireland ⁴⁵						Assessed the 'Contribution to the general Northern Ireland Screen strategy'
Commitment of match funding and satisfactory evidence that the project is additional to the programming levels already						Assessment conducted based on evidence that the project is additional to programming levels already undertaken by the broadcaster as presented in the

⁴⁴ Online e-learning

⁴⁵ This was amended in the assessment forms to read 'contribution to the general Northern Ireland Screen strategy'

	Application Number					Details
	1	2	3	4	5	
undertaken by the broadcaster.						<p>'Proposed Source of Finance' table submitted as part of each application.</p> <p>Assessment conducted based on percentage of total budget requested from USBF and proposed funding sources submitted as part of the application. Funding requested did not exceed 75% in all cases and this is detailed in section 1: Project Details of each assessment form</p>

Source: The completed Application form, Proposal, Assessment document and Decision Letter for projects in the 13th Call

Table 6:2: Assessment by Northern Ireland Screen of Successful Applications - 14th Call

Criteria	Application Number			
	1	2	3	4
Compliance with the Priorities.				
Contribution to the status/promotion of the Ulster-Scots heritage, culture and language.				
Quality of the proposal and audience appeal.				
Value for money/maximising USBF resources.				
Accessibility within the broadcaster's schedule/maximising audience access.				
Contribution to the growth and development of the Ulster-Scots independent production sector in Northern Ireland ⁴⁶				
Commitment of match funding and satisfactory evidence that the project is additional to the programming levels already undertaken by the broadcaster.				

Source: The completed Application form, Proposal, Assessment document and Decision Letter for projects in the 14th Call

⁴⁶ This was amended in the assessment forms to read 'contribution to the general Northern Ireland Screen strategy'

6.4.2 Unsuccessful Applications

Table 6:3: Assessment by Northern Ireland Screen of Unsuccessful Applications - 13th Call

	Application Number		
	1	2	3
Selection Criteria			
Compliance with the Priorities.			
Contribution to the status/promotion of the Ulster-Scots heritage, culture and language.			
Quality of the proposal and audience appeal.			
Value for money/maximising USBF resources.			
Accessibility within the broadcaster's schedule/maximising audience access.	N/A ⁴⁷		
Contribution to the growth and development of the Ulster-Scots independent production sector in Northern Ireland. ⁴⁸			
Commitment of match funding and satisfactory evidence that the project is additional to the programming levels already undertaken by the broadcaster.	N/A ⁴⁹		
<p><i>Reasons for rejection</i></p> <p><i>Application 1:</i></p> <p><i>Ulster-Scots connections were not strong enough to warrant support from the Fund</i></p> <p><i>Script not submitted as part of the application</i></p> <p><i>Audience appeal was not addressed sufficiently</i></p> <p><i>Application 2:</i></p> <p><i>Ulster-Scots connections were not strong enough to warrant support from the Fund</i></p> <p><i>Application 3:</i></p> <p><i>Ulster-Scots connections were not strong enough to warrant support from the Fund</i></p>			

Source: The completed Application form, Proposal, Assessment document and Decision Letter for projects in the 13th Call

⁴⁷ This is a web series so this piece of selection criteria does not apply

⁴⁸ This was amended in the assessment forms to read 'contribution to the general Northern Ireland Screen strategy'

⁴⁹ N/A for additional to current Ulster Scots programming by the broadcaster as this is a web series

Table 6:4: Assessment by Northern Ireland Screen of Unsuccessful Applications - 14th Call

	Application Number	
	1	2
Selection Criteria		
Compliance with the Priorities.		
Contribution to the status/promotion of the Ulster-Scots heritage, culture and language.		
Quality of the proposal and audience appeal.		
Value for money/maximising USBF resources.		
Accessibility within the broadcaster’s schedule/maximising audience access.		
Contribution to the growth and development of the Ulster-Scots independent production sector in Northern Ireland ⁵⁰		
Commitment of match funding and satisfactory evidence that the project is additional to the programming levels already undertaken by the broadcaster.		
<p><i>Reasons for rejection</i></p> <p><i>Application 1:</i></p> <p><i>Not enough local talent showcased</i></p> <p><i>A greater narrative on the Ulster-Scots influences and clearer Scottish links required</i></p> <p><i>Application 2:</i></p> <p><i>Ulster-Scots content within the project is not at a high enough level to warrant support from the Fund</i></p>		

Source: The completed Application form, Proposal, Assessment document and Decision Letter for projects in the 14th Call

A review of the Northern Ireland Screen assessment of the applications to the 13th and 14th funding rounds found that the assessment process has been completed in its entirety and all applications were assessed against the same set of selection criteria based on the application form and treatment submitted by production companies. Details of why an application was unsuccessful is detailed in the rejection letters. However it is noted that projects were assessed in relation to ‘contribution to the general Northern Ireland Screen strategy’ rather than ‘contribution to the growth and development of the Ulster-Scots independent production sector in Northern Ireland’ as stated in the USBF guidelines for assessment. In addition, there should be more detailed evidence on how the application complies with the USBF priorities, how / the extent to which it is additional to current

⁵⁰ This was amended in the assessment forms to read ‘contribution to the general Northern Ireland Screen strategy’

Ulster-Scots programming by the broadcaster and how the project would contribute to the general Northern Ireland Screen strategy.

6.5 Review of Risk Management Processes

There is a Corporate Risk Register currently in place within Northern Ireland Screen that was developed by the senior management team to reflect the HM Treasury ‘The Orange Book: Management of Risk – Principles and Concepts’ (2004). This includes:

- The grading of risk on scale of 1 to 5, both in terms of impact and likelihood of risk occurring;
- Assessment of risks across different business areas (for example development of a dynamic and sustainable screen industry in NI; development of an integrated screen industry through education provision; make a significant contribution to film, culture, education and training in NI through support of Exhibition and Festivals; Transitional arrangements due to department changes; IT Systems) and
- A risk owner, mitigation system and action plan detailed in each case.

Risk is treated within the overall Northern Ireland Screen risk management process and the specific risk issues raised in relation to USBF is the availability of funding.

6.6 Summary

A review of the Northern Ireland Screen assessment of the applications to the 13th and 14th funding rounds found that that the assessment process has been completed in its entirety, however projects were assessed in relation to ‘contribution to the general Northern Ireland Screen strategy’ rather than ‘contribution to the growth and development of the Ulster-Scots independent production sector in Northern Ireland’ as stated in the USBF guidelines for assessment.

Currently applications are assessed qualitatively at both stages. The Northern Ireland Screen assessment forms do not give enough detailed information to make clear the basis for the decision being made (e.g. how the project meets USBF priorities or how it is additional to content currently being broadcast, for example the assessment of additionality for the Northern Visions application under the 14th call states “this series would be additional” and no further detail is provided on how or the evidence to support this).

As noted in section 5.3, feedback from production companies highlighted high levels of satisfaction with the application and assessment timescales as well as communication on the progress of their application, however it was noted that greater clarity is needed on the types of projects/ areas of interest that would be funded by the USBF. Survey respondents suggested that decisions on applications varied depending on the committee members involved and it can be difficult to take into account the differing needs of members while also aligning with the needs / expectations of the broadcaster. Therefore they felt greater clarity of the programmes to be supported by USBF and broadcasters would be helpful.

Feedback from the Investment Committee (see section 5.2) indicated that the Investment Committee’s priorities and decision making processes have developed over time as the skills and confidence of members have increased. The areas for development included the development of a

programming strategy; greater use of Ulster-Scots specialists by production companies; involvement of an Executive Producer with Ulster-Scots knowledge/ expertise, the use of online/ digital media and development of the relationship with UTV.

7 BENCHMARKING

7.1 Introduction

This section delivers on the terms of reference requirement to compare USBF with the Irish Language Broadcast Fund (ILBF) in Northern Ireland and the Gaelic Media Services in Scotland (BBC ALBA). The evaluators also included the Sound and Vision Scheme in the Republic of Ireland as recommended by an Investment Committee member and two international case study examples, the Austrian “Fund for the Promotion of Non-commercial Broadcasting”⁵¹ and the Croatian “Fund for the Promotion of Pluralism and Diversity of Electronic Media”.⁵² The following section provides an overview of the key findings and further detail on each of the benchmarks is in appendix F.

7.2 Comparison Information

The funds / schemes reviewed represent a range of support mechanisms for the promotion of culture, heritage and experience as well as minority languages. They exemplify differing broadcasting landscapes, variation in size, scope and remit which means it is not possible to accurately compare the results achieved with the those of the USBF, however they illustrate the different approaches taken and processes followed.

Table 7.1 outlines the operational and delivery elements of the ILBF, BBC ALBA and the Sound and Vision Scheme in the Republic of Ireland as well that of the USBF. It should be noted that none of the comparable funds, notably ILBF and BBC Alba, is directly parallel to the USBF.

⁵¹ The fund supports three types of activity and divides its resources in the ratio 80:10:10 on, respectively: content and project funding. This refers to the production and broadcast of programmes or to the funding of projects that lead to the production and broadcasting of programmes (including tradition/heritage); Education Funding. Supporting training of both, commercial and non-commercial broadcasting technical staff; and Research Funding. Supporting the conduct of audience research.

⁵² The Fund is used for producing public interest programmes of television and/or radio broadcasters at the local and regional levels and to support non-profit television and/or radio broadcasters (community television/radio). This includes promotion of cultural creativity and fostering of cultural heritage and promotion of works in dialects of the Croatian language. The Fund is also used to encourage employment of skilled employees in television and/or radio broadcasters at the local and regional levels and non-profit television and/or radio broadcasters. The fund is financed by taking 3% of the national license fee levied on owners of radio and television receivers. (The fund is a rolling fund in the sense that any monies not spend in one year are retained for the following year.)

Table 7:1: Comparison of Operation and Delivery Elements

Assessment Element	USBF	ILBF	BBC ALBA	Sound and Vision Scheme
SMART objectives / targets	✓	✓	✓	
Assessment Criteria	✓	✓		✓
Quantitative / Qualitative Assessment	Qualitative	Qualitative	N/A ⁵³	Qualitative
Use of external assessors / advisors	✓ (Investment Committee)	✓ (Investment Committee)		✓ (two external assessors)
Letter of Commitment from a broadcaster required	✓	✓		✓

The detail is included in appendix F.

7.3 Summary

Overall the USBF application and assessment process compares well with other funds / support mechanisms and follows the same process as the ILBF. The USBF involves a qualitative assessment process and while the “Fund for the Promotion of Pluralism and Diversity of Electronic Media”⁵⁴ in Croatia has a numeric scoring system to rate and rank applications submitted and the

⁵³ As they are now a co-broadcaster, BBC ALBA commission to fit the BBC ALBA schedule strategy rather than pre-set quantitative or qualitative assessment criteria

⁵⁴ The Fund is used for producing public interest programmes of television and/or radio broadcasters at the local and regional levels and to support non-profit television and/or radio broadcasters (community television/radio). This includes promotion of cultural creativity and fostering of cultural heritage and promotion of works in dialects of the Croatian language. The Fund is also used to encourage employment of skilled employees in television and/or radio broadcasters at the local and regional levels and non-profit television and/or radio broadcasters. The fund is financed by taking 3% of the national license fee levied on owners of radio and television receivers. (The fund is a rolling fund in the sense that any monies not spend in one year are retained for the following year.)

Sound and Vision programme also has a more rigorous approach⁵⁵ the evaluation report⁵⁶ highlighted that this was overly complicated and resource intensive. Specifically, it was highlighted that the same process operates for simple, low-budget radio projects as for high-value, complex screen productions and that the level of information required from applicants is considerable for small projects, small funding amounts or where an applicant has applied on many previous occasions. While feedback from Investment Committee members and production companies highlighted that the USBF application and assessment process currently works well, the evidence collected could be more fully developed. Specifically, there is an opportunity for more information to be included in the Northern Ireland Screen assessment form as well as more detailed notes of the Investment Committee assessment against the funding criteria for each application. Investment Committee minutes should detail both the final decision and the reasons for this decision for each project assessed.

A review of similar support mechanisms for the promotion of minority language, culture and heritage has identified the following key findings relating to design, development and operation that could provide useful learning for the USBF:

- Targets - the ILBF and BBC Alba have a more comprehensive set of targets / objectives that include training and employment, cost per minute and development of non-linear content⁵⁷ to ensure that funded projects reach as wide an audience as possible; and
- Training – other funds such as the ILBF⁵⁸ or the “Fund for the Promotion of Non-commercial Broadcasting”⁵⁹ in Austria⁶⁰ provide training to develop television production skills.

⁵⁵ Specifically: a preliminary check-box assessment takes place to ensure the application meets the requirements in terms of the information supplied and the formats in which it is submitted, etc.; following this, there are two sequential external assessments of the application: one assessor considers the application, and then this, along with the first assessor’s opinion, is passed to a second assessor; here is an internal assessment by a BAI staff member; a collective decision is reached in discussions between the second external assessor, the internal assessor, and BAI officials; and in the case where the total funding applied for by approved projects exceeds the funds available in the round, a “strategic assessment” process takes place to select those projects that best adhere to the Scheme objectives

⁵⁶ Crowe Horwath (2013) *Statutory Review of the Sound and Vision Scheme*

⁵⁷ Nonlinear television is defined as non-traditional means of viewing that enables place and timeshifting. This contrasts with traditional linear television, where viewers must watch a scheduled TV program at the time it is broadcasted, and on the channel it is presented on

⁵⁸ The ILBF provides support for a suite of training and development programmes (e.g. Trainee Assistant Producers; Trainee Producer /Director & Trainee Senior Producer Schemes; New Entrant Trainee Scheme with Local Production Companies & Northern Visions (local TV station); Broadcasting Scheme with Local TV Station Northern Visions/NvTv; MA in Film & TV Management; MA in Documentary Practice; Skills Development Bursary Fund; Group courses; Radio Training)

⁵⁹ The fund supports three types of activity and divides its resources in the ratio 80:10:10 on, respectively: content and project funding. This refers to the production and broadcast of programmes or to the funding of projects that lead to the production and broadcasting of programmes (including tradition/heritage); Education Funding. Supporting training of both, commercial and non-commercial broadcasting technical staff; and Research Funding. Supporting the conduct of audience research.

⁶⁰ European Commission (2010) State aid No N 632/2009 – Austria Nichtkommerzieller Rundfunk-Fonds

8 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Introduction

This section summarises the key findings of the evaluation and draws on consultation and other evidence to provide recommendations on future government intervention in this sector.

8.2 Conclusions

8.2.1 Need for the USBF

The USBF was established as a result of political developments in Northern Ireland (specifically the Hillsborough Agreement). The Fund is still needed as:

- although the main Broadcaster in Northern Ireland (BBC) has Charter requirements to reflect and promote different cultures, it would not be able to broadcast current programmes supported through the Fund without this support; and
- there is a need under The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages to promote minority languages/ safeguard culture and heritage.

The USBF was established at a time when the Ulster-Scots sector was still in its infancy and therefore the aims and objectives of the USBF should be reviewed and new outcome measures should be set to reflect:

- TV broadcasting hours;
- Ulster-Scots language programmes as a percentage of the broadcast time;
- Development of Ulster-Scots programmes that increase respect for Ulster-Scots language, culture and heritage (monitoring survey results above baseline levels every three years);
- Numbers trained in media from the Ulster-Scots sector; and
- Percentage increase in people from both communities understanding the Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture.

8.2.2 USBF Operation and Delivery

Investment Committee Membership

Each Investment Committee member is initially appointed for two years with eligibility for reappointment; as many of the committee members have now served over two years the committee should be refreshed during 2016/17.

Going forward, the Investment Committee should incorporate the following:

- Appointment of the Committee chair every four years in line with appointment of the USBF Board member of Northern Ireland Screen (appointed by the Minister of the sponsoring department);
- A BBC representative nominated by the BBC;
- A representative nominated by the Ulster-Scots Agency;

- Three independent members recruited through an open competition and endorsed by the Board of Northern Ireland Screen, bringing the total to 6 members.

It is understood that previously it has been difficult to recruit Investment Committee members from the Ulster-Scots community, therefore there is a need to raise awareness of the Fund, the benefits it brings and the vacancies on the committee once these are available.

A briefing/ training session should be held with the Investment Committee once new members are appointed to cover the role of the committee; the learnings gained; the impact the USBF is expecting to deliver; and the current strategy in place to deliver these.

Application / Assessment Process

- The current process involves an initial review of the application submitted by Northern Ireland Screen and this assessment is then provided to the Investment Committee, along with the treatment, for review and final decision. However the Northern Ireland Screen assessment forms do not provide sufficiently detailed information on how decisions are made (e.g. how the project meets USBF priorities or how it is additional to content currently being broadcast. For example, the assessment of additionality for the Northern Visions application under the 14th call states “this series would be additional” and no further detail is provided on how it is additional or the evidence to support this; there is no evidence other than Investment Committee meeting minutes to detail how decisions to fund a project are arrived at.
- The involvement of an Ulster-Scots advisor/expert during production is set out in letters of offer and this is welcomed.
- The Mackin report (2015)⁶¹ recommended that professional in-house expertise in Ulster-Scots at an operational and programming level at the BBC was essential as this would facilitate corporate in-house leadership and provide a focus for potential opportunities and collaborations. We support this recommendation (and understand it is going ahead) in order to address issues that have arisen in relation to the extent and depth of Ulster-Scots content within BBC USBF supported programmes.
- Feedback from production companies indicates high levels of satisfaction with the application and assessment timescales as well as communication on the progress of their application, however feedback included the need for greater clarity on the types of projects that would be funded by the USBF.
- Feedback from production companies and committee members suggest the overall structure of the application and assessment process works well and the need for a broadcaster commitment to be confirmed as part of the application process should be maintained in order to provide assurance that the programme will be aired and has already been reviewed and assessed by the broadcaster at an early stage.

Programme Management

While the Investment Committee has provided input into funded productions through one to one meetings with production companies, consultee feedback suggests that funded projects have not

⁶¹ Maureen Mackin Consulting (2016) *Towards a new BBC editorial strategy for Ulster Scots*

always successfully engaged or dealt with Ulster-Scots themes. While this will be strengthened through the appointment of a BBC Executive Producer for BBC productions, there is also scope for further conditionality in Letters of Offer on how issues are referenced, the percentage of Ulster-Scots language content and penalties if these are not delivered on. These conditions should also take into account the needs of broadcasters. For example, the Austria “Fund for the Promotion of Non-commercial Broadcasting” or the Croatia “Fund for the Promotion of Pluralism and Diversity of Electronic Media” both state that the administering organisation has the right to request information / evidence that the original commitment is being fulfilled and in the absence of satisfactory evidence, funding can be withdrawn.

Relationship with broadcasters

There is a strong relationship between the USBF Investment Committee and the BBC, however feedback suggests a less well developed relationship with other broadcasters. Feedback provided by the BBC highlights the BBC’s commitments following the Mackin Report⁶² on its Ulster-Scots output, including how the appointment of a senior editorial figure with lead responsibility for Ulster-Scots programming across radio, television and online, will facilitate closer and co-ordinated working with the USBF Committee and that it will allow the BBC to develop its links with the sector and a range of stakeholders. As noted above, it is important that the appointed BBC Executive with responsibility for Ulster-Scots is also BBC representative on the Investment Committee in line with the ILBF. Any conflicts of interest between the appointee’s role as an Investment Committee member with responsibility for delivering the Fund and his/ her responsibilities to the BBC should be managed with the Chair.

8.2.3 USBF Performance

Overall, the Fund has performed well against its targets in each year from 2011/12 – 2015/16, meeting 100% of its KPIs in three of the five years. It met 75% of its KPIs in 2011/12 (the KPI not met related to delivering 20 additional hours of Ulster-Scots programming, this target was thereafter reduced to 12 hours) and 67% in 2014/15 (the two KPIs not met related to commissioning 12 additional hours of Ulster-Scots programming and one programme to receive an international broadcast).

In addition, BBC Audience Index data suggests high levels of audience satisfaction and feedback from production companies, broadcasters and other key stakeholders highlight the positive impact of the Fund.

Production Companies

Feedback from production companies that have benefitted from the USBF highlights that it has had positive cultural, educational and economics impacts.

While it is difficult to gauge the economic impact of the Fund as production companies often employ short-term or temporary workers, seven production companies (63.6%, base=11) have increased

⁶² Maureen Mackin Consulting (2016) Towards a new BBC editorial strategy for Ulster Scots

employment as a result of involvement with the USBF (23 roles (8 of which are temporary/freelance), and 9 of which now skilled in Ulster-Scots television production). In addition, two thirds of the fifteen production companies (n=10) said that involvement with the USBF had increased company turnover and companies also reported high levels of satisfaction with the support provided.

Key areas for development included the need for greater clarity on the funding priorities, what type of projects can be funded and what constitutes Ulster-Scots content. In addition, feedback highlighted a perceived disparity between the objectives/priorities of the USBF and broadcasters.

Broadcasters / Other Key Stakeholders

Feedback from key stakeholders highlighted that the Investment Committee had established a strong relationship with the BBC and welcomed the commissioning of the Mackin report and its findings regarding how the Ulster-Scots content of funded programmes could be improved. However, it was suggested that the relationship between the Investment Committee and UTV is less well developed. While feedback from the Investment Committee highlighted the desire for more Ulster-Scots programmes to be broadcast by UTV, feedback from the broadcaster emphasised that programmes need to have sufficient popular appeal to equal or outperform programmes in a similar primetime slot, and that the Investment Committee did not have a sufficient appreciation of the commercial realities it operates under.

8.2.4 Fund Remit

Feedback from production companies highlighted the need for greater flexibility in what can be funded by the USBF. In particular, respondents noted that a strong Ulster-Scots culture exists that requires more than historical documentaries and the Fund should be open to funding more fictional/ drama/ animation/ musical Ulster-Scots productions. Investment Committee feedback also highlighted opportunities for the Fund to review its priorities based on what has attracted more / less interest as well as developments within the sector. However, it is recognised that dramas are expensive to produce and there is a limitation on the broadcaster contribution (25% of total project funding), therefore given the size of the Fund and that any change to its scope would require a greater broadcaster contribution, there is limited opportunity to support this genre.

8.3 Recommendations

Operation

- Investment Committee Membership:
 - We recommend that the Investment Committee is refreshed and recruitment for committee members whose terms have expired takes place as planned during 2016-17. It is essential that the new committee have knowledge of Ulster-Scots language, culture and heritage, at least one member should have production expertise, and one member should be from the Ulster-Scots community. Any appointed Executive Producer for Ulster-Scots programming in the BBC should become the BBC nominee on the Investment Committee and any conflicts of interest should be managed with the Chair.

- Given that all of the Investment Committee are outside their two-year period, we recommend that recruitment takes place in a phased manner.
- We recommend that awareness of the Fund is raised with potential Investment Committee members in order to attract applications for membership.
 - We recommend that training sessions are held once new Investment Committee members are appointed to: outline the roles/ responsibilities of the Committee and learnings from previous work (this report/ the Mackin Report etc.); to meet the Broadcasters and understand their needs / how they could work together; meet production companies to understand their needs; and understand the monitoring and reporting processes within Northern Ireland Screen.
- USBF Commissioning Process Strategy: We recommend that a Commissioning Strategy be developed by the Committee on the basis of discussions with key stakeholders in the Ulster-Scots sector and broadcasters, and within the context of relevant funding, policy and other considerations, to detail the vision and future priorities for the USBF as well as strategic objectives and smart targets. Specific outcome measures should be set to reflect: TV broadcasting hours; Ulster-Scots language programmes as a percentage of the broadcast time; Ulster-Scots programmes that increase respect for Ulster-Scots language, culture and heritage (monitor survey results above baseline levels); economic/ social benefits (e.g. numbers trained in media from Ulster-Scots sector); and percentage increase in people from both communities understanding the Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture.
 - Application process:
 - We recommend that detail on the types of projects that would be funded by the USBF and examples should be provided as part of the guidance for applicants / in the Commissioning Strategy.
 - We confirm the need to retain the broadcaster letter as a requirement of the application process.
 - Assessment: We recommend that greater detail is provided in the Northern Ireland Screen assessment form and provided to the Investment Committee to make funding decisions. This should include, for example, detail on how the proposed project is additional using evidence provided by the production company / broadcaster.
 - Expert involvement: We support the fact that Northern Ireland Screen require Ulster-Scots advisors/ experts in all their letters of offer. We recommend that the Ulster-Scots expert is involved at all stages of production (pre, during and post production), and that a clear indication of how the expert will be used at each stage is provided to the Investment Committee as part of the application.
 - Ulster-Scots Executive Producer: We support the recommendation of the Mackin report (2015)⁶³ that there is professional in-house expertise in Ulster-Scots at an operational and programming level at the BBC.

⁶³ Maureen Mackin Consulting (2016) *Towards a new BBC editorial strategy for Ulster Scots*

- **Ulster-Scots Language:** We recommend that letters of offer include as appropriate conditionality of funding linked to a satisfactory percentage of Ulster-Scots language content in language programmes. There should also be an agreement on the percentage of language programmes to be delivered by the Fund. However, it is recognised that there are difficulties in defining what a language programme is, and this definition should be agreed. Thereafter, the exact numbers/percentage of the Fund dedicated to language programmes should be agreed with the Broadcasters, although Northern Ireland Screen should be actively seeking the maximum that can be obtained.
- **Investment Committee Meeting minutes:** We recommend that committee meeting minutes include a summary of actions and who is responsible to implement these / by when. Progress against these actions should be reviewed at the start of the following meeting.

Remit / Future Development

Issues for consideration in the future development of the fund include:

- We recommend that a piece of work is completed to explore the potential impact of increasing the Ulster-Scots Fund and the further contribution this could make to Northern Ireland government strategies;
- We recommend that skills development funding is provided, similar to that provided by the ILBF⁶⁴ or the “Fund for the Promotion of Non-commercial Broadcasting”⁶⁵ in Austria⁶⁶ to develop television production skills in the Ulster-Scots sector;
- We recommend that there should be increased diversity of programming - to include a greater spread of genres as well as historical documentaries (whilst recognising that dramas will be difficult to support given the size of the Fund); and
- We recommend the remit of the Fund should be formally extended to include audio content, however this should represent no more than 10% of the total funding allocation.

⁶⁴ The ILBF provides support for a suite of training and development programmes (e.g. Trainee Assistant Producers; Trainee Producer /Director & Trainee Senior Producer Schemes; New Entrant Trainee Scheme with Local Production Companies & Northern Visions (local TV station); Broadcasting Scheme with Local TV Station Northern Visions/NvTv; MA in Film & TV Management; MA in Documentary Practice; Skills Development Bursary Fund; Group courses; Radio Training)

⁶⁵ The fund supports three types of activity and divides its resources in the ratio 80:10:10 on, respectively: content and project funding. This refers to the production and broadcast of programmes or to the funding of projects that lead to the production and broadcasting of programmes (including tradition/heritage); Education Funding. Supporting training of both, commercial and non-commercial broadcasting technical staff; and Research Funding. Supporting the conduct of audience research.

⁶⁶ European Commission (2010) State aid No N 632/2009 – Austria Nichtkommerzieller Rundfunk-Fonds