

## **MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING: 10<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2020**

**11am, Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> March 2020**

**Northern Ireland Screen, 21 Alfred Street, Belfast**

**Present:** Rotha Johnston (Chairwoman), Róise Ní Bhaoill, Fionnuala Deane, Michael Fanning, Richard Hanna, Susan Picken, Sheila Fleming

**Via Conference call:** Michael Kuhn, Elaine Sperber

**In attendance:** Richard Williams (CEO), Shane Helferty (Acting Director of Finance and Corporate Services), Andrew Reid (Head of Production), Aine Walsh (Head of ILBF), Bernard McCloskey (Head of Education), Mary McVey (Marketing Manager), Linda McGuinness (Financial Controller), Marie Shivers (PA to CEO)

**Apologies:** Greg Maguire, Brenda Romero, Adeline Dinsmore, Mark Huffam

No conflicts of interest were noted.

### **1.0 Minutes of the last meeting**

1.1 The minutes were agreed after minor amendment.

1.2 It was noted that the benchmarking information was being pursued through a BFI/BFC data working group; that accessing the BBC iPlayer in the Republic of Ireland was not achievable within the regulatory framework; and that Richard Hanna had met with BBC Ulster-Scots Executive Fiona Keane.

### **2.0 Chairwoman's business**

2.1 Rotha thanked everyone for their time yesterday at the Strategic Away Day, the minutes of which will be circulated shortly.

2.2 The Chairwoman recorded the Board's gratitude to Linda Martin for many years' service. She also thanked Linda McGuinness and the finance team for stepping up in Linda Martin's absence. She then welcomed Shane Helferty to the organisation.

2.3 The Chairwoman noted the visit she, the CEO and Andrew Reid had undertaken to the London Screen Academy. The organisation is very impressive and she thanked Michael Kuhn for informing the Board about the school.

2.4 It was noted that a formal Ministerial visit to the Game of Thrones Studio Tour at Banbridge would be an opportunity to present the combined economic value of Game of Thrones that was being put together with help from Tourism NI.

2.5 The Acting Permanent Secretary DfE along with the Department of Finance held a briefing meeting on partnership working in February to announce the replacing of the MSFM.

2.6 The Department had confirmed a date to meet the new Economy Minister, Diane Dodds.

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

- 3.1 We are in good shape for year end and on track for a full spend although coronavirus is having an impact in terms of engagement with large-scale events/gatherings.
- 3.2 Our office refurbishment is about to commence with the intended completion by the end of March.
- 3.3 We are taking advantage of the office refurbishment to trial remote working due to the coronavirus. Early indications are that we can function reasonably well remotely.
- 3.4 We are already accumulating losses as a consequence of Coronavirus - modest but not insignificant, with flights cancelled due to trade fairs being postponed or cancelled. Physical production is where the problems will lie but we are doing everything that we can and monitoring the situation on a regular basis. If anything changes significantly, the Board will be kept informed.
- 3.5 We have been approached by Tourism Ireland regarding Disney's premier of Artemis Fowl in Dublin. They have proposed a follow-up screening in Belfast though this is likely to be postponed due to the coronavirus.
- 3.6 The Secretary of State recently enjoyed a visit to The Northman at Belfast Harbour Studios. During the visit the CEO pushed with him growing large-scale production in the nations and regions.
- 3.7 Andrew Reid updated the Board on other potential studio projects as a result of his and the CEO's recent visit to Los Angeles. Concern that suppliers and crew alike were complacent regarding the steady flow of production taking place. The Chairwoman suggested we commission a piece of evidence-based work to help understand our relative competitiveness.
- 3.8 David Puttnam recently visited Belfast. The possibility of undertaking a remote tutorial scheme with him is under consideration in conjunction with Screen Ireland.
- 3.9 The KPI Report and Investment Report were noted by the Board with no queries.
- 3.10 The Pixel Mill experienced some initial teething troubles but the new cohort of companies now seem to have settled. Sheila Fleming noted the incredibly talented and intelligent people working at The Pixel Mill.

### **4.0 Finance, Audit and Governance**

#### Risk Register

- 4.1 The CEO noted the most live issue at the moment was the risk from coronavirus. The Risk Register was refreshed quite considerably recently but nothing has dramatically changed.

- 4.2 The risk to ILBF/USBF will be constant until we revert to multi-year funding and away from single year extensions.
- 4.3 The Board were content that this was a fair reflection and approved the Risk Register.

#### Audit and Risk Committee Update

- 4.4 Sheila Fleming updated the Board on the recent Committee meeting noting that the audit reports were considered and a small number of minor issues resolved.

#### Management Accounts to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2020

- 4.5 The Management Accounts were presented to the Board for noting. The following significant variances were highlighted:
- Screen Fund cashflow was over budget by £622,000 due to project timing;
  - 70% of annual cash budget was released at the end of January 2020;
  - All budgets on track for full spend by year-end;
  - Legal fees have increased in the last re-phase due to incremental approach applied to the four-year strategy;
  - Balance sheet shows debtors owe £177,000. The majority of this is divided between recoupment on projects and the rest for invoices sent out in January for productions that have trainees attached.

#### Strategic Resources Committee Update

- 4.6 The Chairwoman noted that the Committee considered the KPI report and looked at the issues around staff regrading and restructuring. Sheila Fleming had agreed to assist the Executive with difficulties navigating the job evaluation process.
- 4.7 In relation to HR, the new Assistant Accountant maternity cover will start soon, and the ILBF Officer maternity cover has been appointed. There was one HR issue to be resolved.

### **5.0 Other Committee Updates**

#### Skills/Training

- 5.1 Andrew Reid noted that the BBC3 Youth Executive was up and running and working well so far. He also noted that Zodiak Kids were looking for an apprentice producer and to open up a pool of writing talent for children's series as a creative talent pipeline for the company.

#### SECWG

- 5.2 The Working Group met last week and covered most of the issues raised at yesterday's Strategic Away Day. The Committee noted concerns that there was no mechanism for teacher development of skills within the current education authority system. It was left entirely to schools to identify teacher needs and address gaps. CLCs can do only so much but are limited by their size and capacity. BFI Film Academies were nearly concluded but some remaining events may be affected by the coronavirus.

- 5.3 The Chairwoman suggested a presentation to the CBI CEO on areas we need to explore further at some point in the future.

#### Investment Committee

- 5.4 Clips from recent projects were presented to the Board and the Investment Report was noted.

#### ILBF

- 5.5 Gradam Ceoil filmed at the Waterfront recently and broadcast live on TG4. The Committee is hoping that a programme on the late Aódán MacPóilin, a former Board member, will air later this year. Training was on target with 6 new entrants and a new trainee editor with Imagine Media appointed. The funding deadline for the next round closed on 6<sup>th</sup> March.

#### USBF

- 5.6 The USBF Chair recently met with the CEO and Fiona Keane from the BBC to better understand commissioning. This meeting threw up some issues to consider around how to maximise the value of USBF content beyond broadcast on BBC NI and on how to re-energise the USBF's guidance of and influence over editorial content to ensure maximum value against the USBF's objectives. The Board noted the progress achieved.

#### Marketing Calendar

- 5.7 The Board noted that it would welcome an outline marketing plan of strategic engagement as a result of yesterday's Strategic Away Day.

### **6.0 Any Other Business**

- 6.1 A Board questionnaire will be circulated via Survey Monkey shortly. Sheila Fleming agreed to review content before circulation.
- 6.2 The CEO recently met with Sinead Rocks, Managing Director of Nations & Regions for Channel 4 to discuss a formal MOU, similar to the BBC Partnership Agreement.
- 6.3 Michael Kuhn offered to host events or dinners at his London house as a different model for approaching key producers/companies we wish to work with. He noted that visiting the London Screen Academy just round the corner might also be a useful hook.

### **7.0 Date of Next Meeting**

- 7.1 The date of the next meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> June 2020 at 11am.**

Point	Detail	Actioned by	Update
3.7	The Chairwoman suggested we commission a piece of evidence-based work to help understand our relative competitiveness with regard to suppliers and crew	AR	In progress

5.3	The Chairwoman suggested a presentation to the CBI CEO on areas we need to explore further, eg teacher skills development at a future point	CEO	In progress
5.7	Draw up a marketing plan of strategic engagement as a result of yesterday's Strategic Away Day.	CEO/ MMcV	In progress
6.1	Circulate a Board questionnaire via Survey Monkey	Chairwoman	Circulated



Signed:

(Chairwoman)

Date: 9<sup>th</sup> June 2020