

MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING: 16TH SEPTEMBER 2020

11am, Tuesday 16th September 2020

Via Zoom

Present: Rotha Johnston (Chairwoman), Michael Kuhn, Elaine Sperber, Róise Ní Bhaoill, Michael Fanning, Susan Picken, Greg Maguire, Brenda Romero, Adeline Dinsmore, Mark Huffam, Peter Weil, Camel Mullan, Tom Gray, Fionnuala Deane

In attendance: Richard Williams (CEO), Andrew Reid (Head of Production), Aine Walsh (Head of ILBF), Bernard McCloskey (Head of Education), Mary McVey (Marketing Manager), Marie Shivers (PA to CEO)

Apologies: Richard Hanna, Sheila Fleming, Linda McGuinness (Financial Controller)

No conflicts of interest were noted.

1.0 Minutes of the Board meetings of 30th April 2020 and 9th June 2020

- 1.1 The Board were content with the minutes of the meeting held on 30th April 2020. All actions have been carried out. The minutes were agreed by the Board and signed.
- 1.2 The Board were content with the minutes of the meeting held on 9th June 2020. The Chairwoman noted that Richard Williams and Aine Walsh were in current dialogue with NIO and DCMS on New Decade New Approach and are awaiting a response from them with a decision on their commitment to funding. They hope to have a significant update before the next Board meeting. The minutes were agreed by the Board and signed.

2.0 Chairwoman's business

- 2.1 The Chairwoman thanked the Board for completing the recent questionnaires for submission to the Department.
- 2.2 The Chairwoman noted that the term for some Board members was coming to an end within the next year with an impact on the Committees. She will discuss this individually with Board members over the coming months.
- 2.3 She also noted that the Department would shortly begin the recruitment process for the new Chair.
- 2.4 The Chairwoman met with the BBC Director General to look at areas for inclusion in the next BBC Partnership Agreement and this would be considered as part of the Northern Ireland Screen strategy development process for 2022-2026. The two previous Partnership Agreements provided a useful framework for the BBC's contribution to the development of the screen industry in Northern Ireland.

- 2.5 Work over the summer months has been successful in bringing back screen production but it was noted that many people were still struggling and that we had to continue to do everything we could to help.
- 2.6 The Chairwoman thanked Carmel Mullan and Sheila Fleming for sitting on the interview panel for the recruitment of the Chief Operating Officer.

3.0 Board Terms of Reference

- 3.1 The Board's Terms of Reference were approved.

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

- 4.1 The CEO announced the arrival of 3 babies to the Northern Ireland Screen family during the summer period.
- 4.2 He reported that Anne Dorbie would join in October as our new COO. Anne is well qualified, comes from an ALB background, has considerable general management experience and experience of public funds and government departments.
- 4.3 He also noted that our first Intern in the Office Assistant role is leaving to take up a position within the production sector. This is a success as the Intern role was set up as a stepping-stone into the sector. However, it does mean we have to start the recruitment process to identify the next Office Assistant Intern.

Performance Indicator Report and Investment Report

- 4.4 The CEO highlighted that the ratio approach to Performance Management masked the impact of lockdown. He indicated that he hoped that the mid-term evaluation would begin shortly and would capture all of the information required to assess the success of the strategy and build a new strategy.
- 4.5 Many projects have been significantly delayed, but none have as yet fallen over, and we are beginning to see new projects being financed with the project development supply chain coming back to life.
- 4.6 We are pushing hard to drive the timeframe of the evaluation forward and to get the Department to sign off on the next package of funding before this strategy comes to an end. While this process is being finalised, we should pick up on the themes of the March Away Day in terms of developing the strategy including SMIL, Belfast Film Centre and the BBC Partnership Agreement, with the aim to conclude the exercise in February 2021.
- 4.7 Richard Williams envisaged the Department would need around two months to complete the appraisal of the evaluation and we are therefore targeting an agreement on the new strategy by the end of June.
- 4.8 The Chairwoman noted that the main issue is continuity of funding. A continuing commitment to 4-year funding is imperative.

- 4.9 In response to a query about the ILBF being over budget by £400,000, Richard Williams clarified that we can't cashflow budgets in the year if we only commit the budget in the year so the budgeting then rolls into the following year. Commitments usually exceed the annual budget.
- 4.10 Richard Williams also clarified that the KPIs for The Pixel Mill are to be reviewed to make sure they are still relevant and that we are capturing the value accurately.
- 4.11 The Chairwoman suggested that Rory Clifford present to the Digital Innovation Working Group in advance of the fuller strategy development, also to the Board at a later date. Brenda Romero volunteered to assist Rory, and Andrew Reid will follow up.
- 4.12 In response to a question, the CEO confirmed that he expected to see more collaborations with Channel 5/FIVE but on an ad hoc basis as FIVE had indicated it did not wish to enter any wider partnership.
- 4.14 The Chairwoman noted that the Dungeons and Dragons project came as a direct result of the visit to Los Angeles in January. Andrew Reid is fielding regular calls for studio availability. He and Mary McVey have put together a presentation to send out to studios which reflects what we have to offer. Andrew will forward the presentation to Board members for their information.
- 4.15 Mary McVey confirmed that there has been a lot of coverage recently of projects that filmed in Northern Ireland. It is evident that there is a lot happening despite the current situation. Despite us not being able to help companies attend markets, we are doing what we can to assist them in a virtual capacity.

5.0 Finance, Audit and Governance

Risk Register

- 5.1 Richard Williams noted that the last Risk Register was dominated by Covid related risks. The good news is that those risks have been downgraded. The other risks captured have all bar one also been downgraded. However, the situation is still fragile and can change quickly.
- 5.2 The area of our activity that is in most danger is Exhibition, including Film Festivals and the QFT. We have fed into an overarching Communities' bid for relief. Cashflowing this funding is unlikely to be before December.
- 5.3 The Board noted that a large number of risks were being well managed.

Audit and Risk Committee Update

- 5.4 The Committee Chair reported a clean bill of health with nothing to raise from Internal or External Audit.

Management Accounts to 31st January 2020

- 5.5 Richard Williams reported on the Management Accounts which capture a delayed cashflow for the year. However, he highlighted the production awards contract summary which presents the commitments we have made, many of which should be realised within the financial year. We have further bids outstanding for additional funding for games and large-scale and have no concerns about cashflowing these if they are successful.
- 5.6 The Board noted the Management Accounts.

Strategic Resources Committee Update

- 5.7 The Committee met recently and discussed the Management Accounts, reviewed KPIs and discussed current HR issues. The sickness report was noted with very little sickness occurring during lockdown. Current maternity leave and the development of SMIL and the Belfast Film Centre were also discussed.

6.0 Other Committee Updates

SECWG

- 6.1 Education partners including the CLCs, Into Film and Screen Works, have reported a tremendous amount of work over the summer supporting teachers and young people to work online.
- 6.2 The Board agreed to write to CCEA expressing concern regarding the possibility of removing the practical film making element of the Moving Image Arts GCSE and to stress the value of Moving Image as an entry point to the screen industry with the film as the calling card more than the grade.

ILBF

- 6.3 Róise Ní Bháoil updated the Board on recent ILBF business including: the next funding round in September which is expected to be busy due to applications for special development funding received at the height of the pandemic; training is on track with mitigating measures put in place including course extensions of 6 months; there was a good uptake on 100% skills bursaries; the Daniel O'Donnell show during lockdown remains a ratings winner and Macha Media's documentary on the secret Nazi in Donegal attracting strong ratings and beating the network share. Róise was pleased to note that 4 ILBF supported projects had been nominated for Oireachtas Media Awards. The positive results from a survey of former ILBF trainees showed that 90% of trainees surveyed gained employment following their training and just over 72% are still employed in the sector.
- 6.4 It was noted that a review of ILBF should be scheduled shortly to comply with our commitment to review both ILBF and USBF every 5 years.
- 6.5 As well as talks with NIO and DCMS we have also made contact with DFA regarding the Irish Government's commitment within the New Decade New Approach document.

USBF

- 6.6 The USBF Chair has driven a substantial and successful initiative to energise and shape Ulster-Scots content beyond TV. The Fund has committed to a number of projects including a language project.
- 6.7 It is always important to have USBF content on UTV/ITV not least because UTV has a bigger audience overall. We are pleased to see that Lough Foyle, a beautiful series rich in Ulster-Scots content, airs from 21st September.
- 6.8 Michael Fanning was pleased to be involved in the recruitment of the next USBF trainee. There is a continuing and growing interest in this scheme and the quality of candidates was very good.
- 6.9 The Chairwoman noted that the digital projects awarded are on a pilot basis and we will look at KPIs for these going forward.

Training

- 6.10 Aim High 5 is drawing to a close. We hope to discuss Aim High 6 with the BBC shortly.

Investment Committee

- 6.11 Andrew Reid noted that Black Medicine, the New Talent Focus film, will finally be completing this week and will send a link out to the Investment Committee to review.
- 6.12 Michael Kuhn noted that there may be pressure on studio film budgets when cinemas are not turning over their usual audiences and box office, and that the traditional terrestrial broadcaster budgets are under tremendous pressure. Sales agents on the other hand are interested in picking up indie projects so demand from this is looking good.

7.0 Strategy Development Update

- 7.1 With our obligation for Opening Doors Strategy 3 to be completed by March 2021 we need to know what our strategic priorities are by December 2020. The Board will break into small working groups to discuss these in detail. Guidelines on what the key areas are, and the minutes of the March Strategic Away Day will be circulated to the Board. Separate meetings will be arranged during October followed by a joint discussion in early November to determine the priorities and identify any further work that needs to be carried out. A set of recommendations will then be brought back to the Board for partial sign off at the December meeting.
- 7.2 Integration of the Film Centre within the Destination Hub has become stronger with a growing understanding that archive activity will play a significant part in the exhibit and connect the two aspects and that our education work will be the primary education activity within the Destination Hub.
- 7.3 The Board also discussed SMIL, noting with encouragement the focus on industry and the possibility of significant industry partners for the project.

- 7.5 Richard Williams confirmed that the Coronavirus Development Fund had been well received. £600,000 was allocated in the first phase and some of those projects have already reached broadcast. The second phase of the fund is due for assessment next week. The impact of this fund will need to be evaluated and a summary report will be compiled and circulated to the Board.

8.0 Marketing Calendar

- 8.1 Susan Picken noted that the Belfast Film Festival was partnering with Foyle and hoping to have some screenings in November. QFT is also taking some of the London Film Festival films and showing them simultaneously with London. Bernard McCloskey will follow-up with Belfast Film Festival for further information.

9.0 Any Other Business

- 9.1 No other business was discussed.

7.0 Date of Next Meeting

- 7.1 The date of the next meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday 8th December 2020 at 11am via Zoom.**

Point	Detail	Actioned by	Update
2.2	Discuss Committee membership separately with individual members	Chairwoman	
4.10	Review The Pixel Mill KPIs	CEO/Rory Clifford	
4.11	Present to Digital Innovation Working Group	Rory Clifford/ Andrew Reid	
4.14	Forward studios presentation to Board members	Andrew Reid	
6.2	Write to CCEA setting out our concerns for GCSE MIA course content	Bernard McCloskey	
6.11	Send Black Medicine link to Investment Committee for review	Andrew Reid	
7.1	Circulate guidelines on what the key areas are and the minutes of the March Strategic Away Day	Marie Shivers	
7.1	Arrange working groups for discussion of strategic priorities	CEO	
7.5	Circulate summary report on the Coronavirus Development Fund to Board	CEO	
8.1	Follow up with Belfast Film Festival for further information on joint screenings	Bernard McCloskey	

Signed: 
 (Chairwoman)

Date: 8th December 2020