

## **MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING: 14<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2021**

**11am, Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> December 2021**

**Via Zoom**

**Present:** Rotha Johnston (Chairwoman), Richard Hanna, Michael Fanning, Susan Picken, Peter Weil, Tom Gray, Carmel Mullan, Fionnuala Deane, Greg Maguire, Róise Ní Bhaoill

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

**Apologies:** Brenda Romero, Mark Huffam

No conflicts of interest were noted.

### **1.0 Minutes of the Board meetings of 14<sup>th</sup> September 2021**

- 1.1 The Board minutes were agreed and signed. All actions were complete. The Board survey will be officially closed at the end of this week for those who have yet to complete it.

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

- 2.1 The Chairwoman outlined discussions with the Minister at the recent Belfast Premiere, which were primarily around funding for the new Strategy. The Chairwoman had also contacted the Permanent Secretary regarding concerns over our ability to make commitments in light of the recent moratorium on spending. The chair confirmed she would follow-up.
- 2.2 The Chairwoman has written to the Minister of State for NI requesting urgent confirmation of the situation regarding the Executive's commitment to the Language funds. She will update the Board once a response has been received.
- 2.3 We have been informed that a number of people have been shortlisted for the Chair position and interviews will take place in early January with the successful candidate taking up the position in early February.
- 2.4 The Chairwoman noted the extensive work undertaken by executive colleagues over the past few months. Significant investments had been made and the Board were updated on the value of work across all departments of Northern Ireland Screen.

#### Terms of Reference

- 2.5 The Board commissioned the Executive as a response to an audit recommendation to carry out a review of all ToRs of the Board and Committees. These have now been aligned and all Committees have had a chance to review them. No changes to responsibilities have been made, they are now in the same format. A timeline for periodic review is in place. The Board approved the Terms of Reference for all committees and working groups.

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

- 3.1 The CEO summarised the Board report highlighting good news around so many recent awards including Nothing Compares being selected for Sundance and 'Belfast' receiving 7 Golden Globe nominations. Ratings for Hope Street are very good and the recent Belfast Film Festival showed an excellent programme of diverse projects. The forthcoming City Deal launch is a big positive and the CEO is also encouraged that Belfast Harbour has announced phase 2 of the studios expansion which is now out to tender. He also noted the current challenges we face with DfE's moratorium on spending and the NIO's silence on the uplift for the language funds.
- 3.2 We expect that additional funding will be made available from DfC for a new entrant scheme to be managed by the BBC in conjunction with Northern Ireland Screen and through a new SPV. This is potentially a 3-year programme that could have significant impact.
- 3.3 The Board agreed that a follow-up on additional funding for the language funds was required.

#### KPI Report

- 3.4 No concerns at this stage noted. We are hoping to support two New Talent Focus projects in this coming financial year.

#### Investment Report

- 3.5 ILBF is heavily over committed which is currently of no concern, although if there remains no indication of funding, we may have to manage the speed of which projects are coming through.

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

#### Risk Register

- 4.1 Carmel Mullan updated the Board on changes to the Risk Register, notably the addition of the potential repercussions on the industry due to the Omicron variant, our ability to commit to projects due to lack of budget and the lack of clarity on language funding to the Register. Language funding risk also upgraded. Discussed at length. The Board approved the Risk Register.

#### Audit and Risk Committee Update

- 4.2 Carmel summarised the main issues discussed at the recent meeting. Before the IT Security Policy was reviewed in detail it was decided that it would be timely to undertake a thorough review of IT infrastructure. This was subsequently carried out and a draft drawn up noting the key issues. We are working through the areas identified and will address these with available capital money then move onto the IT Security Policy with the aim for completion by the end of this financial year.
- 4.3 Direct Award Contracts over £5k are to be approved by the CEO before Committee and subsequently Board approval. This should be done in advance of awarding the contract. Any contracts of £30k are to go to the Department to seek CPD approval in advance of coming to the Board. This is now a standing item on the Audit and Risk Committee agenda.

- 4.4 The Board agreed retrospective approval for the outstanding Direct Award Contracts. It was also agreed that the Committee and Board were happy to do offline approvals in between Board meetings, if necessary in preference to retrospective approval.
- 4.5 The Financial Statements have been fully signed off and were approved by the Board.

#### Management Accounts to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2021

- 4.6 The Management Accounts were summarised with nothing to report in terms of areas of risk. We are on track for a full spend.

#### Strategic Resources Committee Update

- 4.7 The Chairwoman updated the Board on items discussed at the last meeting. Along with Management Accounts, Investment Report, budget allocation and KPIs, the current business pipeline, HR report and staff survey were discussed. Positive responses came out of the staff survey along with some areas of concern that are being addressed.
- 4.8 Anne Dorbie informed the Board that the USBF Evaluation is currently underway, and we are expecting the report to be received early in the New Year. The ILBF Evaluation Report has been delayed but will be brought to the next meeting. Feedback regarding the performance of the Strategic Investment Board during this evaluation will be fed back to SIB along with our sponsor Department.

### **5.0 Other Committee Updates**

#### NIHAWG

- 5.1 Peter Weil informed the Board that results from the BBC partnership are becoming apparent. 100 Years of Happiness, a BFF live event based around content from Northern Ireland Screen's DFA and NI Rewind, recently launched. The digitisation project with BAI is now complete and a public engagement programme is to launch. The third exciting project is with the Linenhall Library around extraordinary women and looks at local news stories from the archive. Peter paid credit to Ann Donnelly who has been leading on this.

#### Skills/Training

- 5.2 Andrew Reid updated the Board on the recent recruitment of the Skills Executive. Clare Campbell is assisting the Skills team on the management side and also on the new BBC Partnership/DfC funded project. Conversations are underway with HBO and Netflix who run bigger schemes regarding larger pots of funding for recruiting trainees.
- 5.3 Recruitment for Aim High will close in early January with the Assessment Centre taking place at the end of January/early February and Boot Camp in early March. The Start 360 project is recruiting from under-represented groups and will offer a more bespoke entry into the industry. The aim is to then recruit 10 of these trainees for long-term traineeships through the normal process. Peter Weil noted his involvement with offering staff mentoring with Start 360. The Board agreed this did not constitute a conflict of interest.
- 5.4 In response to a question from the Chair, the CEO confirmed that if the BBC/DfC funding comes through it will create additional work for our Skills Department but the scheme will be resourced and managed separately albeit we will have considerable involvement.

### CEFFWG

- 5.5 Susan Picken updated the Board on Exhibition business. The last quarter had been exceptionally busy with the Belfast Film Festival, Foyle, Cinemagic and Into Film festivals. The Working Group met last week and discussed downsides with festival timings and the ability to secure films. The Group will review date to potentially reconfigure the festival calendar. Exhibition evaluation is underway and will hopefully pick up on issues to work through which can then be reflected in the exhibition strategy. A first draft is due early in the New Year and will be brought to the next meeting.
- 5.6 Susan also noted the imminent City Deals launch on Wednesday with the physical launch of Belfast Stories including the Film Centre on Friday. There has been quite a lot of social media on this and Susan will send through information for us to spread through our media channels and to circulate to the Board.
- 5.7 In terms of next steps for the Belfast Film Centre we need to keep working to strengthen the business case. The departmental review is delayed until March. BBC is keen that the skills development value of the Belfast Film Centre is more strongly presented in the Business Case.

### SECWG

- 5.8 DfC were impressed with the Education Evaluation Report and the work that Into Film has been undertaking on the ScreenWorks programme. The CLCs continue with their successful partnership skills programme. 592 teachers participated in programmes over the summer period. Into Film have moved to new offices and now have a dedicated training space. Storybuilder resources are doing very well with extra reprints needed. Northern Ireland Screen Academies are just finishing with a good take up of a mix of both face to face and online delivery. Visual Effects and Game Academies will be introduced in January. Games for Schools by IntoGames are putting a programme in place in England which will be extended to Northern Ireland.
- 5.9 In light of the Chair's imminent departure, a decision on a new member of the SECWG will be left for the new Chair once appointed.

### Irish Language Broadcast Fund (ILBF)

- 5.10 Despite the difficulties with the consultants the outcome of the ILBF Evaluation was extremely positive and a good news story for the Fund. It is a clear endorsement of the Fund on a strategic and operational level with the overarching view that the Fund is very well run. The key threat throughout the report was the security and continuity of funding. It recommended that there is an uplift in funding in line with per capita funding, Gaelic in Scotland and Welsh in Wales. Some other recommendations were contingent on securing that funding in the areas of production, increase in training provision, increasing outputs for children's programming, interactive and digital as well as around outreach and cooperation with external bodies to the benefit of the ILBF.
- 5.11 Áine Walsh hoped the amended document, which she requested be reduced in size for clarity, be received this week.
- 5.12 Anne confirmed that both this and the USBF Evaluation Report will be circulated to the Board once received. The Chairwoman requested that the Reports go to the respective Committees and then to the Board with a cover note for approval.

### Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund (USBF)

- 5.13 Richard Hanna noted for the record that the significant uplift this year was very encouraging but not without its challenges given the short notice received. Despite that he felt that the Fund and Committee rose to the challenge with calls for broadcast, drama, digital and language projects. He is very pleased with the progress over the last 12-18 months despite the difficulty of being able to plan effectively with this level of uncertainty.
- 5.14 Richard had a lengthy meeting with the consultants on the USBF Evaluation and was very encouraged with the consultants who gave him the impression that they were well read into the brief, and they were very engaged not just with the process but with the work of the Fund.

### Investment Committee

- 5.15 Two projects had returned to the Committee requesting further funding. After discussion it was felt that the requests were genuine and they were approved. A number of projects being broadcast at the moment. Peter spent a day with Andrew and his team and was incredibly impressed with the passion and creativity they bring to their work. The future looks really good with a number of excellent projects in the pipeline for the next year.

## **6.0 Marketing Calendar**

- 6.1 The Chairwoman thanked Mary McVey for the updated marketing calendar and for the recent successful premiere of Belfast at the Waterfront Hall. Mary noted the date set for launch of new Strategy being Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> March 2022.

## **7.0 Any Other Business**

- 7.1 Andrew reflected back to Rotha's early days on the Board and reiterated the executive's genuine appreciation for all the work that Rotha has undertaken, especially on staff terms and conditions.
- 7.2 Rotha noted her gratitude for the work done by the Board and thanked all the staff again. Rotha noted the staff are an exceptional small team of talented individuals who together do such great work. In closing she noted the impact Northern Ireland Screen has had on the economy and the lives of those engaged in the screen sector here.

## **9.0 Date of Next Meeting**

- 9.1 The date of the next meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> March at 11am** with the venue to be confirmed.

Point	Detail	Actioned by	Update
2.1	Request written confirmation that we can make commitments before final budget allocations are put in place	Chairwoman	Complete
2.2	Update the Board on response from Minister of State re language funds when received	Chairwoman	RW to provide verbal update at March meeting

4.8	The ILBF Evaluation Report to be brought to the Board for approval after Committee approval	Áine Walsh	Board approved offline 18.2.22
	Feedback to SIB and DfE regarding performance during ILBF Evaluation	CEO	Complete
5.5	Exhibition Evaluation to be brought to the next meeting	Susan Picken	Attached with papers
5.6	Send through information for social media on Belfast Stories/City Deals launch	Susan Picken	Complete
5.12	The USBF Evaluation Report to be brought to the Board for approval after Committee approval	Anne Dorbie	Report to go to Committee for approval

Signed:



Date: 15<sup>th</sup> March 2022