

MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING: 15TH MARCH 2022

11am, Tuesday 15th March 2022

Via Zoom

Present: David Sterling (Chair), Richard Hanna, Michael Fanning, Susan Picken, Peter Weil, Tom Gray, Carmel Mullan, Fionnuala Deane, Róise Ní Bhaoill, Brenda Romero

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), Marie Shivers (PA to CEO)

Apologies: Greg Maguire, Mark Huffam

No conflicts of interest were noted.

The Chair introduced himself to the Board. He is very impressed by the Board and staff members he has met so far and looks forward to working with everyone to build on the huge success already achieved.

1.0 Minutes of the Board meetings of 14th December 2021

1.1 The Board agreed the draft minutes were an accurate reflection of the last meeting and were signed. All actions and matters arising were completed.

2.0 Chairman's business

2.1 The Chair had a useful meeting with Tim Davie where he emphasised the importance of the nations and regions and the BBC's responsibility to Northern Ireland. The Chair also met yesterday with Mike Brennan and received assurance that a budget letter would issue shortly likely to be close to standstill funding. The difference between standstill and the strategy budget will have to be addressed as the year goes on. Assurance was received that Studio Ulster is a priority and the letter of offer should be addressed ahead of the deadline. The Department is still working on the new Partnership Agreement which will replace the current MSFM governance arrangements which should allow us greater discretion to move money between budget lines. It was a positive meeting overall.

2.2 We have the disappointing confirmation that the additional ILBF/USBF funding from DCMS arising from New Decade New Approach was only a one-year commitment and will not be renewed.

2.3 The Chair was delighted to report that DfE have confirmed the four Board appointments due for renewal in June 2022. He noted his congratulations and looks forward to working with those and the rest of the Board.

2.4 Launch of new strategy has been delayed due to a combination of uncertainty around budgets and the current forthcoming election. Our launch event will be a public facing activity as we have plenty to celebrate and need to be out there bringing the sector together.

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

- 3.1 The CEO summarised the Board report highlighting 'Belfast' winning the Best British Film BAFTA and its numerous Oscar nominations.
- 3.2 The CEO and Head of Production are in LA next week for the Oscars Wilde event, a US Alliance organised pre-Oscars event hosted this year by JJ Abrams who is currently attached to the project housed in Titanic Studios. Belfast Harbour and Studio Ulster are also sending representatives for wider engagement.
- 3.3 Year end is approaching which is a challenging period but we are on track to commit and cashflow our full budget. Studio Ulster remains a challenge. City Deal is not well aligned with the commercial opportunity, but hopefully over the next six months we can successfully navigate the issues.
- 3.4 A number of recommissions are coming through: Fast and Farmerish, Hope Street and Dalgleish have all been confirmed for further series. In addition, the screening of The Northman as well as the Derry Girls premiere event all add to the positive industry news.
- 3.5 As part of our Strategy commitments, we are addressing the greening of our sector. If we don't have the right greening credentials, it will soon become difficult to attract production from companies/broadcasters with their own Carbon Reducing targets. We are at the final stages of recruiting a Facilities and Sustainability Manager to give us a constant focus on the greening of our sector.
- 3.6 We have recently undertaken a modest restructuring with Bernard McCloskey shifting over to take responsibility for the reimagining of the moving image curriculum including possible revisions to MIA GCSE and A-level. David McConnell and Francis Jones will take over day to day Education and Archive responsibilities respectively and will report directly to the CEO.

KPI Report

- 3.7 Nothing to add.

Investment Report

- 3.8 Detail to be covered in Investment Committee update.

4.0 Finance, Audit and Governance

Risk Register

- 4.1 Carmel Mullan updated the Board on changes to the Risk Register, notably the reduction in Covid risks, Finance and Operation, language funds and Studio Ulster, all of which have already been addressed by the Chair. Cyber Security has been added to the Register, which is part of the ongoing IT Security Policy work.
- 4.2 Róise noted that while indications are that the Irish Government will provide funding for the ILBF for the next three years, no official confirmation has been received.
- 4.3 The Board approved the Risk Register.

Audit and Risk Committee Update

- 4.4 Carmel summarised the main issues discussed at the recent meeting notably the Risk Register and IT Security Policy. Following an independent review of IT Security, a number of actions were identified, most of which have been addressed. Once all recommendations have been actioned, the policy will go to the Committee again for review.
- 4.5 The ALB Assurance Statement and the Travel and Subsistence policy, which was in line with HMRC guidance, both of which were discussed at the last ARC meeting, were approved by the Board

Management Accounts to 31st January 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 Chair updated the Board on items discussed at the last meeting including the Equal Opportunities Policy and Declaration and the Stress at Work policy, both of which were approved by the Board.

5.0 Other Committee Updates

Skills/Training

- 5.1 The Chair noted that it would be useful to have a specific Board member responsible for skills and asked for suggestions. We need to think about how this should be structured.
- 5.2 Anne Dorbie updated the Board on CINE giving some background to the project. The BBC have set up an SPV to control the funds and over three years we will assist the SPV and the BBC in the delivery of 100 new entrant placements of different types. £2.8m is the initial allocation but this could move closer to £4-5m. We are in the process of recruiting an Access and Outreach Manager to oversee the programme.
- 5.3 Andrew Reid updated the Board on recent trainee programmes, notably Start 360, New Entrant and Aim High programmes.

CEFFWG

- 5.4 Susan Picken updated the Board on Exhibition business. Belfast Screen Centre (formerly Belfast Film Centre) is moving ahead, relevant documents will be shared with the Board as they become available. Susan is working closely with David and Anne, refining and strengthening the business case which will hopefully go forward to OBC2 stage soon. Currently everything is progressing as planned.
- 5.5 Susan added that the Exhibition Evaluation was a very valuable piece of work. It shows the commitment, impact and energy the sector is bringing in terms of connecting with communities. David McConnell added that the report was very clear and concise in terms of success and is consistent with the Department's objectives.
- 5.6 The Board noted the report and supports the findings of the report.

SECWG

- 5.7 Bernard McCloskey summarised highlights from the recent working group meeting, noting the MIA study currently taking place to track students in the industry. 300 students have been recruited for the next phase and additional students will be recruited as the study goes on. 58 students have volunteered to provide case studies for the final report. The CLCs continue to roll out their school partnership programmes and Into Film is working on an inter-generational programme involving DfA clips with young filmmakers and interviews with older people. The work produced helps demonstrate the power of archive and the work Into Film is doing in schools.
- 5.8 David McConnell added that ScreenWorks and the Screen Academies programmes are going from strength to strength now that they are back in person. Girls making Games is a fully subscribed 8-week collaboration with a Derry-based company aimed at 10-13 year olds. Nerve Belfast will move out of Havelock House at the end of March hopefully to W5 where they will cohabit with Microsoft, Almac and other partners.

Irish Language Broadcast Fund (ILBF)

- 5.9 Róise noted that it is a good time to be involved in Irish drama and film. IFTA awarded best film to an Irish language film, and the ILBF funded first feature drama, Doineann's cinematic release in January garnered excellent feedback, mostly from non-Irish language speakers.
- 5.10 DfC has produced a report on the recommendations for an Irish language strategy which includes a section on broadcasting. Recommendations with respect to the ILBF are mostly around the issue of funding. Consultation is open on the recommendations. The Board agreed that we should engage in the consultation process. The CEO will explore further.
- 5.11 The Board welcomed the report and noted the recommendations made in relation to the ILBF.

Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund (USBF)

- 5.12 Richard Hanna highlighted that a USBF short film made by an independent production company had been accepted by two international film festivals in USA and Denmark, illustrating that there is international interest in Ulster-Scots language and content.
- 5.13 The Independent Review of the USBF was well written and thorough. The review team interviewed 43 stakeholders who overall responded very positively. The report recognised the high-quality content produced, trainee progress as well as the strategic building of capacity over time. Richard was very encouraged with engagement from local production companies with a number of new digital focused companies engaging for the first time.
- 5.14 We need to give some thought to how we move forward on the four key recommendations in the report which will be circulated to the Committee for consideration.
- 5.15 The Board noted the report.

Investment Committee

- 5.16 Peter updated the Board on the two big projects recently agreed at Committee. Credit should go to our team for the successful negotiations to bring these two big projects to Northern Ireland. Peter is confident these will be good investments.

NIHAWG

- 5.17 Peter thanked Bernard for his contribution to these meetings and complimented Francis Jones on his work so far on the archive. The UTV Archive partnership with PRONI is working very well, 2023 will see the end of the first phase. Peter would like the support of the Board to open up negotiations as he is keen to continue this partnership. Peter also complemented Bronagh McTasney from the Archive team who wrote a wonderful article for the Irish Times. Peter would like this article circulated to the Board.

6.0 Marketing Calendar

- 6.1 The Chair thanked Mary McVey for the updated marketing calendar. Mary confirmed that the Derry Girls premiere is now confirmed for 7th April and The Northman screening will be confirmed shortly. A few delegations are underway now that restrictions are easing.

7.0 Any Other Business

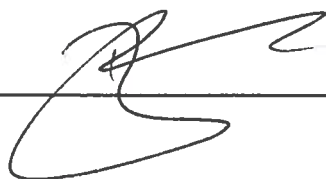
- 7.1 The Chair hopes that this will be the last virtual meeting and looks forward to meeting everyone in person in June, obviously taking account of the ongoing Covid situation.
- 7.2 David McConnell added the good news in terms of cinemas returning post covid and 'Belfast' attracting the largest cumulative audience of all time at QFT with over 12,500 box office tickets sold.

9.0 Date of Next Meeting

- 9.1 The date of the next meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday 21st June 2022 at 11am** at Northern Ireland Screen.

Point	Detail	Actioned by	Update
5.1	Suggestions for a Board member to head up skills	All	
5.10	Engage in the Irish Language Strategy consultation process	CEO	Consultation is closed
5.17	Circulate Bronagh's Irish Times article to the Board	Marie Shivers	Attached with papers

Signed: _____



Date: _____

21/6/22