

**Tha Boord o Ulster-Scotch
79th Board Meeting
13th June 2008
Holiday Inn Hotel, Belfast**

Present;	Mr Mark Thompson
	Mr William Humphrey
	Mr William Leathem
	Mrs Angela Graham
	Mrs Jackie Reed
	Dr William Roulston
	Dr Ian Adamson
In attendance;	Mr George Patton
	Mr Jim Millar
	Mr Michael McCullough
Recording Secretary;	Miss Sarah Lockhart

1. Welcome from the Chairman

Mr Thompson welcomed everyone to the Board Meeting. He stated the agenda would be re-scheduled and all staff except for the CEO would not be required after lunch.

2. Apologies

Apologies were accepted from Dr Aileen Douglas.

3. Minutes of the last meeting (16.05.08)

The Board accepted the minutes of the previous meeting with some minor amendments;

Proposed and agreed: that the minute be accepted.

4. Matters arising

Single Tender Projects

Mr Patton stated this issue was partially resolved although there still seems to be problem regarding the proposed arrangement with the Ulster Historical Foundation. Mr Thompson is to pursue this as Chairman of the Board.

Press Complaints

Mr Thompson stated the process is ongoing and he will report back to the Board when a decision is made.

Milwaukee Irish Fest

Mr Patton advised that arrangements had been made for Mr Alistair McReynolds to speak at the summer school at this event. Accommodation is being paid for by the organisers and the Agency is currently negotiating flight costs. The Board noted these arrangements.

Language Diversity in Schools Programme

Mr Millar updated the Board on this proposal. He had met with Ferdie McAnally CEO Foras na Gaeilge, Liam Logan and Ian Malcolm regarding this programme. It is proposed to pilot this throughout 30 controlled, maintained and integrated schools within Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland with each session costing the Agency £500. It was noted that these costs were much higher than the Agency offered in relation to performers engaging in “after school clubs” etc. The Board requested that further work be carried out regarding both the size of the pilot scheme and the cost and a comprehensive evaluation presented at the next meeting for consideration.

David Healy Day 2008

A Financial Breakdown was presented to the Board for David Healy Day 2008. Mr Patton advised the Board of the plans for the day and responded to queries from Board members. Mr Patton explained that there would be two specific zones for Ulster-Scots Dance, Music and Language Workshops. Additionally traditional music would be played at intervals around the entire area.

Mr Leathem welcomed the financial breakdown and noted that the cost (£25k) was in line with the figures verbally mentioned previously at the Board, but was different from the figure that had initially been advised at an audit meeting (£10k). The CEO advised that clearly the lower figure had been incorrect as the event could not have been staged for that amount. Further clarification has shown that the £10k figure was David Healy’s appearance fee.

The Board also raised the issue of staff time required to delivery the Healy Day, and expressed the view that the event should not unnecessarily deflect from normal duties.

Mr Humphrey commented on his personal experience at last year’s event and found the Day to be very worthwhile to the Agency by reaching out to thousands of children and providing positive press opportunities. It was noted that the cost of £25k was half of the previous year’s cost.

IUSS

Mr Thompson stated that the background briefing paper on the IUSS which he was preparing for the Board was not complete and would be presented at a future meeting.

Mr Millar informed the Board he had met with John Wilson and he would now be sitting in on the Academic Board Meetings. It was agreed that the Chair of the Audit

Committee should join the Agency Chair and CEO on the Management Board. The additional Agency representative to the Academic Board would be appointed at the next meeting.

5. Chairman's Report

The Chairman listed the events he had attended and the organisations he had been in contact with since the last meeting:

- Meeting with Dr Crawford Gribben of Trinity College, with Dr William Roulston.
- Weekend of Covenanters in Ulster events at Carrickfergus delivered by the Reformed Presbyterian Church.
- NIAO meeting with George Patton and William Humphrey.
- Spoke at the OFCOM PSB event at the Radisson Hotel.
- Corporate Governance training with most of the Board.
- Meeting with Trevor Ringland and Prof David Carson of UU re: Northern Ireland Tourist Board.
- Preparing a background paper for the Board on the Institute of Ulster Scots Studies.
- Irish News front page article falsely linking the Agency to a "UVF band" is with the Press Complaints Commission.
- Forthcoming meeting at First Derry Presbyterian Church with NITB re: possible tourist/visitor centre on the Walls.

6. Executives Report

The Board received the written report. Mr Thompson asked what marketing would be carried out in terms of the proposed partnership with the IFA. Mr Patton advised that specific leaflets should be designed with the cost being approximately £5,000-£6,000. The Board agreed that this should be progressed.

Executive also informed the Board of the recent success of the cruise ships. The aim was to engage disembarking tourists in Ulster-Scots culture. These have been so successful that the "ships handlers" have threatened to exclude Belfast from its port of call as passengers wanted to stop and enjoy the entertainment rather than hurry to the coach trips (where it seems the "handlers" make their money). In the circumstances the Agency have agreed to change entertainment times from the morning to the afternoon. Mr Humphrey explained he had spoken to the staff at Harbour Commission and asked for an explanation in writing as to why the times had to be changed. Mr Humphrey added he will set up a meeting at City Centre Management to pursue Ulster-Scots entertainment in the Summer Evenings. Mr Patton paid tribute to Ms Hanna's contribution in organising the entertainment for the cruise ships.

Mr McCullough entered the meeting at this stage

7. Budget & Business Plan Progress

The Board raised a few queries regarding the Budget Report. A number of inaccuracies were noted and are to be corrected.

Mr Thompson suggested that the marketing seminars to be organised by September should be held later in the year.

Proposed and agreed.

Mr Humphrey suggested a letter should be sent to Mr Edwin Poots MLA thanking him for his support as DCAL Minister.

Mr Thompson requested that the Executive should present a plan to the August board meeting, outlining how the remaining business plan objectives for 2008 will be met.

At this point the Chairman re-scheduled the agenda – Items 8, 11 and 12 would be dealt with after lunch.

8. Revised Financial Assistance Scheme

Mr Patton sent changes to all board members via email on 2nd June 2008.

As some members did not have a copy with them this will be discussed at the next meeting.

10. Grants and Appeals

(1) European and Ulster Highland Dance Festival

Proposal:	£4,000 of £6,960
	This is a replacement for a festival/championship previously approved by the Board and the event has been scaled down considerably and if the Agency complies with the request there will be a saving on the original grant.

The Board were in agreement to fund this group £4,000.

Proposed and agreed.

(2) Bushmills Ulster-Scots Heritage Group

Proposal:	£48,675 Of £48,675
	This application relates to project work the group would hope to pursue over the next year building on the work already commenced.

It was noted that there were a number of issues with this application which require clarification.

The application will be considered when this is provided.

(3) Jonathan Burgess / Partisan Productions – Production of the Play “Confessions of a Justified Sinner

Proposal:	£71,000
	Total Cost £71,330. Assistance has already been received from the Arts Council (£27,300) and grant aid is being sought from the Community Relations Council. If the Agency is to support this then it probably need to be viewed as a commercial product with appropriate caveats.

The Board found it hard to identify the Ulster-Scots element in the play and it was agreed to seek further advice on this application.

Mr Humphrey retired from the meeting at this stage declaring a conflict of interest.

(4) Ulster-Scots Heritage Council

Following on from the presentation received at the last meeting it was agreed to provide funding from 1st July 2008 to 31st December 2010 consistent with the provisions made in the Corporate Plan.

Mr Humphrey returned to the meeting.

Appeals

(1) Schomberg Society

RE: the award made under the Festival Funding Scheme.

The original grant awarded was for £9,175 against a total spend of £25,448.

Executive’s recommendation was to increase the funding to £11,525.

After discussion the Board were in agreement to fund this festival with £11,525.

Proposed and agreed.

Mrs Reed retired from the meeting at this point.

(2) East Donegal Ulster-Scots Festival

This appeal was upheld and a revised grant was approved with an additional 3,500euro offered.

Mrs Reed returned to the meeting.

13. AOB

SEUPB Project Update

The Project finishes at the end of July and staff will present the Board with a report.

Office Accommodation

Mr Patton and Mr McCullough have signed pre-released agreements. There are some queries regarding service charge. The official opening of the new offices will be sometime in September.

Institute of Ulster-Scots Studies

The Board had already covered this matter in previous discussions.

Summer Schools / After-Schools Clubs

49 groups registered interest.

39 applications were submitted.

2 were declined.

Mr Patton stated the standard of applications had improved dramatically on last years. The letters of offer are due to be sent.

Sailing Project

This project has engaged pupils from Dromore High School to take part in an expedition on sailing to Scotland to learn more about Ulster-Scots. This will commence on Monday 16th June 2008 – Thursday 19th June 2008. However since the previous report to the Board on this project, which was initially planned as a Language Body project to be delivered in partnership with Foras na Gaeilge, Foras have since withdrawn.

Mr Millar is to go on this educational trip. The total cost is £3,000.

Young Ambassadors Convention

The twelve candidates are training to be teachers. They arrive on the 14th July 2008 and they will be divided into 3 groups of 4, each group will either spend time with the St. Patrick's Centre, Foras na Gaelige or the Ulster-Scots Agency. It was suggested a photographer to trail the various events they attend and the work they will be involved with.

Cruise Ships

This matter had already been discussed in the Executive's Report.

14. Date and Venue of Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place on 25th July in the north west with the actual venue to be confirmed.

The Board reconvened after lunch with the CEO being the only member of staff present.

Ulster Scots Language Society

An application for financial assistance from the Ulster Scots Language Society which had been left over from the morning session was considered.

It was the view of the Board that it would be necessary to seek guidance from DCAL regarding the development of the Ulster Scots Academy as there was the potential for duplication in the work proposed by the Society and that which may be the responsibility of the Academy.

It was agreed however to provide interim funding for the Society for the next six months based on the funding package previously offered. Clarification to be sought regarding the establishment of the Academy.

9. Audit

The Board received the draft Interim Management Letter from the NIAO and report of a meeting between representatives of the NIAO, Agency Chairman, Chair of the Audit Committee and CEO. Reports were also received from Goldblatt McGuigan, Internal Auditors and the Agency Audit Committee.

The Board carefully considered all these reports and documents in great detail. The Board and Audit Committee having received the reports with grave concern, and agreed that the situation the reports reveal is unacceptable.

Mr Humphrey, Chair of the Internal Audit Committee, presented a resolution to the Board, which was unanimously adopted, as follows:

“The Board instructs the CEO and staff to put in place an urgent Action Plan to address each of the issues raised within the NIAO and Goldblatt McGuigan reports, with a copy e-mailed to all Board members by Friday 20th June. The Board further requires that significant progress relating to internal systems and procedures be made by the September Board meeting with demonstrable progress thereafter through monthly reports on an ongoing basis.”

The following action points were specifically noted:

- withdraw the offer made to the NIAO that the next set of Agency accounts would be produced in-house. NIAO share the Board’s reservations that the necessary capacity exists in-house;
- external consultancy to be appointed if required to assist in examining all current systems and procedures, and in the implementation of improved systems and procedures;
- the staff review means that all recruitment is on hold until the completion of the review (this decision has the approval of DCAL);
- Goldblatt McGuigan to make a presentation to a future meeting of the Board, probably September;
- CEO to write to Edgar Jardine of DCAL replying to the specific points in Mr Jardine’s letter of 04.03.08 re: systems and procedures;

- the opening of the public information aspect of the new premises to be delayed until at least January 2009, to allow time for new systems to be put in place and for the Agency to prioritise issues arising from the NIAO and Goldblatt McGuigan reports;
- The Chair will brief the Permanent Secretary of DCAL on the detail of the Board decisions.

11. 2009 Business Plan

The Board noted the draft Business Plan for 2009.

12. Staffing

The Board in the context of earlier reports expressed the view that the Agency would not be in a position to prepare the 2008 Accounts “in house”. Instead a professional Company should be engaged. The Finance team should spend time with them as training provision with a view to taking this on for the following year’s accounts. The potential to second someone with financial skills to assist during this period was considered and further thought is to be given to this.

Advice having been sought from DCAL it was decided to suspend recruitment of all permanent posts until the staffing review was complete.

Signed:

Dates: