

**Tha Board O Ulster-Scotch
105th Board Meeting
24th March 2011, 12noon
Ulster-Scots Agency Board Room, Belfast**

Present:	Mr Tom Scott (Chair)
	Mrs Angela Graham (Vice-Chair)
	Mrs Hilary Singleton
	Dr Ian Adamson
	Mr Michael McLoone
	Mr William Leathem
	Mr Tony Crooks
In attendance:	Miss Hazel Campbell (Interim Chief Executive Officer [ICEO])
	Mr Jim Millar (Director of Education and Language)
Recording Minutes:	Mr Michael McCullough (Director of Corporate Services)

1. Welcome from the Chairperson

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed members to the 105th meeting of the Board. Mr Scott also welcomed Mr Wilfie Hamilton, Chair of the USAIG Project Steering Group.
- 1.2 It was noted that the Minister had announced that morning his plans for taking forward Academy issues, which included the setting up of a Ministerial Advisory Group to develop an Academy strategy. Six representatives from the Ulster-Scots sector have been appointed to the Ministerial Advisory Group to provide advice on the strategic development of the sector. Mr Scott has been appointed to represent the Agency.
- 1.3 Mr Hamilton explained that a revised Business Case on the Academy has been prepared with 3 key targets to build a holistic strategy for the sector, which would be earthed in the sector:
- Early sustainable progress;
 - Building sector confidence and capacity; and
 - Developing language, traditional culture and heritage projects.

- 1.4 There would be flexibility within the strategy to develop an Academy or an alternative option. The objective will be to develop a vision for the next 4 years, with significant impact in the sector. The Agency will be a key player in this and its work should complement the work of the Advisory Group. The Ministerial Advisory Group will set priorities with long-term objectives and will have a budget to deliver beyond what the Agency does. The interim development plan will commit to research and it will be published before Easter. This plan will provide a set of principles to guide the progress until the Ministerial Advisory Group determines new guidelines.
- 1.5 Mr Hamilton indicated that he would wish to see the development of common objectives on education, product development and language development, and a plan of how to get there involving the key players working together.
- 1.6 Mrs Singleton welcomed the co-ordinated approach to Ulster-Scots development in the education sector and recognised the need to mainstream Ulster-Scots culture in the curriculum.
- 1.7 Board members wished to see details of the composition and terms of reference for the Ministerial Advisory Group.

ACTION: CEO

- 1.8 Mr Scott thanked Mr Hamilton for the background information he had provided.
- 1.9 **The Executive left the meeting at this point.**
- 1.10 The Chairman briefed Board members on the progress towards the selection and appointment of a Chief Executive. Interviews for those short-listed will take place on 1 April 2011.
- 1.11 In addition the Chairman made Board members aware that the Ulster Scots Broadcasting Fund Board had requested a nominee to that Board from the Agency. As an interim measure the CEO had suggested that Jim Millar attend the USBF meetings. The Minister has subsequently written

indicating an expectation that representation on USBF should reflect the importance of the issue. After a short discussion the Board agreed that:

- the original decision of the CEO was correct given the likelihood of imminent change but as the matter was important the Agency should be represented at CEO level;
- the Board recognised that change was related to the perceived importance given to USBF by the Agency and was not a reflection on the ability or competence of Jim Millar;
- the Board wished to record that, whilst the Minister had a right to make an observation on the issue, the Agency Board was the final arbiter on this matter.

1.12 The Executive re-joined the meeting at this point.

2. Apologies

2.1 No Apologies had been received.

3. Minutes of last Meeting on 12th February 2011

3.1 Minutes of the meeting of the Board on 12th February 2011 were agreed without ammendment.

4. Matters Arising

4.1 The Board agreed that all matters arising would be dealt with in the CEO report.

5. CEO Report

5.1 A joint meeting on publications is scheduled for next week. The Board wished to see a list of planned publications from the Agency and the core funded groups and policy when agreed on

addressing the quality assurance of publications prior to print.

ACTION: CEO

- 5.2 The Agency had received a response from Monreagh accepting the Agency offer. The Agency had planned initially to support this project under working with others, partnering with the Department of Community Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs. In light of this option not being available 1 year interim funding is being made available to enable a future partner to be identified for funding arrangements.
- 5.3 The Ullans Speakers Association and the Ulster-Scots Language Society Business Cases have been approved by the Sponsor Department. There is still no response on the Ulster-Scots Community Network or Monreagh Business Cases. Monreagh have been advised to proceed with the recruitment competition in advance of approval.
- 5.4 The CEO advised the Board that Mr Liam Logan was pleased with the publication of his work.
- 5.5 **Report on Audit Committee**
Mr Tony Crooks gave a verbal report on the Audit and Risk Committee meeting which took place prior to this meeting.
- 5.6 Internal Audit Progress – Two 2010 reports had been received - Purchasing and Procurement with a satisfactory rating and IT with a limited assurance rating as a result of the Agency not having an IT strategy in place. Management had accepted the recommendations and will issue a tender for consultancy expertise to address the IT deficit issues.
- 5.7 The 2011 Internal Audit Plan – was agreed with flexibility built in to enable the committee to revisit priorities.
- 5.8 Update on outstanding Audit recommendations - satisfactory progress with 10 recommendations cleared since the last Audit and Risk Committee meeting.

- 5.9 Risk registers – A key risk relates to the administration of grants, and the Committee await the findings of the grant monitoring and verification audits and will make recommendations to the Board.
- 5.10 2007 Consolidated Accounts – will be presented for signing at the North South Language Body meeting on 14/4/11.
- 5.11 Suspected Fraud – 5 live cases. Management have outlined additional controls put in place to address the issues raised in these cases. The Committee will continue to monitor these cases and ensure appropriate action is taken to reduce the fraud risk in grant awards.
- 5.12 2008 and 2009 accounts – NIAO to meet with CEO and Staff on 29 March 2011 to address potential material issues in the 2008 accounts.

6. Review of Music and Dance Tuition

- 6.1 Mr Millar introduced his paper setting out proposals on the way forward for music and dance tuition taking account of the responses received from the consultation exercise. The Board agreed in principle with the proposal to create an Ulster-Scots music book for tuition in groups. Mrs Singleton suggested working with the Ulster-Scots Community Network Education Officer to develop the music book. Members also supported the integration of lessons in Ulster-Scots history and culture within the music and dance tuition programme and they recommended a mix of both option 1 (provision of a DVD) and option 3 (provision of additional funding to enable groups to engage a speaker in Ulster-Scots history, heritage and culture). Mr McLoone supported the proposal for a strand 2 funding stream for advanced tuition at a higher level in both music and dance that leads to accreditation and a move towards excellence. Board members felt that this should be incentivised through, for example, increasing the rates of grants for this stream. Regarding showcasing opportunities, the Board recommended that the Agency should maintain a register of performers from groups with appropriate geographical balance.

- 6.2 Mr Millar agreed to take members views on Board for inclusion in the new arrangements for music and dance tuition to be introduced in 2012.

ACTION: *Mr Millar*

7. Review of Financial Assistance Scheme

- 7.1 Ms Campbell advised that the review of Financial Assistance Scheme paper was still “work in progress” and required further consideration within the Agency before consulting wider. Her approach was to produce an overarching document with clear requirements on eligibility, timescales, monitoring and evaluation arrangements. The assessment process for each stream of funding would be explained in supporting guidelines in advance of the launch of each scheme. Miss Campbell proposed that small grants of £250.00 would be curtailed to Burns events only and that the 50% deduction on capped awards for overseas performers should be abolished. The position on encouraging east west links would have to be drawn up in the context of the Agency’s statutory remit.
- 7.2 Mr Scott said that the scheme needed to deliver funding to the grass roots to develop Ulster-Scots activity while also supporting a move towards excellence.
- 7.3 He also wanted to make the scheme easy for client groups to understand. He agreed that the Financial Assistance Scheme programme should be high level and the detail included within the guidance notes. Mr Scott reflected on the need to look to modernise aspects of the music and dance. Mrs Singleton advised that at present contemporary dance was being used in dance tuition in Mid Armagh but they had experienced difficulties in producing shows to a professional standard because of skills gaps. Mr Scott hoped that the revised scheme could address this issue, for example through the provision of master-classes.
- 7.4 Recommendation:
Mr Scott asked members to forward any comments in writing to Miss Campbell by 3 April 2011.

ACTION: *Board members*

7.5 The revised scheme will be tabled at the next Board meeting with a view to presenting to a June NSMC meeting.

ACTION: *Miss Campbell*

7.6 **William Leathem joined the meeting at this stage.**

8. Festival Funding

8.1 A paper was presented for the festivals commencing before July 2011. The Board approved the levels of funding recommended. The outstanding festival applications will go to the next Board meeting.

ACTION: *Mr Millar*

9. Community Workers Scheme

9.1 Six new applications have been assessed under the Community Workers Scheme. Funding was agreed at the recommended levels for:

- Coleraine Ulster Scots – 25 hours
- Mid Armagh Community Network – 20 hours
- Loughinsholin – 10 hours

9.2 An application from Mosside was rejected. The Board determined that the application for Altnaveigh House could not be supported at this present time. The Board did not make an award to South East Fermanagh as the group are not constituted as an Ulster-Scots group. However, the Board were keen to see an Ulster-Scots group or umbrella group set up in the

Fermanagh area to avail of the Community Worker Scheme programme and the Development Officer for the area is to investigate the possibility of identifying/assisting an eligible group.

ACTION: *Mr Millar/Mr Reaney*

10. Ulster Orchestra Burns Night Concert

10.1 The Board supported the proposed project presented by Mr McCullough and agreed partnership funding up to £15,000 per year for a 3 year period. The final details for the 2012 concert would be presented to a future Board meeting, following further discussions with the Orchestra Chief Executive.

ACTION: *Mr McCullough*

11. First Derry Presbyterian Church

11.1 The Board supported the project and agreed partnership funding of £20,000 to develop the interpretive centre.

ACTION: *Mr Millar*

12.0 Finance Report

12.1 Mr McCullough presented the Finance papers. Mr McLoone asked if budget profile and forecasting figures could be presented at the next meeting.

ACTION: *Mr McCullough*

13. Marketing Report

13.1 The marketing reports were approved and Board members were encouraged to attend events where possible. Board members planning to attend the schools dramas in the next weeks should notify staff in the Agency to make ticket arrangements.

14. Update on 2011 Business Plan Targets

14.1 Miss Campbell reported that the operational targets are on track and that she had nothing of concern to bring to the attention of Board.

15. AOB

15.1 No further business was discussed.

16. Date of Next Meeting

16.1 The next Board meeting will be held at 10.30am on 14th April 2011, in Foras na Gaeilge Office, Dublin. Further details will be provided to members.

SIGNED:

DATED: