

**Tha Boord o Ulster-Scotch
The Ulster-Scots Agency Board Meeting
2nd March 2007
Four Seasons Hotel,
Monaghan**

Present: Mr Mark Thompson
Mr Jim Devenney
Dr Linde Lunney
Mr Pat Wall
Mr Alistair Simpson
Dr Ian Adamson
Mr Eddie O'Donnell

In attendance: Mr George Patton
Mr Michael McCullough
Mrs Vanessa Wilson

Recording Secretary: Miss Lyndsey Hanna

1. Welcome from the Chairman

The Chairman Mr Thompson welcomed the Board to the 64th meeting at the Four Seasons Hotel, Monaghan and also welcomed Mrs Wilson back to work.

2. Apologies

Apologies were accepted on behalf of Mr Stoker.

Apologies were sent by Mr Devenney. He would be joining the meeting later after a meeting with Minister Ó Cuiv at Monreagh.

Executive also tendered apologies on behalf of Mr Millar, Director of Language and Education who is off work ill at present.

3. Minutes of Meeting 25th January and 16th February 2007

25th January 2007

The minutes from January were not adopted by the Board. Executive are to amend minute to shorter version before the Board would pass at next Board meeting.

16th February 2007

The minutes were adopted with the following exception:

- Bottom paragraph on page 2 to read as: In doing this the Agency would be catering for the local and American communities creating a new interest to Ulster-Scots language.
- Bullet 3 on page 3 should read: A mechanism to identify strengths of speakers in communities.
- Bullet 5 should read: Work to improve language status

Proposed: Board accepted the minute.

Arising from the minutes, Executive are to produce minutes more appropriate for inclusion on the website.

4. Matters Arising

Letter to NSMC

NSMC have contacted Sponsor Departments to arrange a meeting to discuss Board concerns regarding the standardisation process.

TV Programme

Discussions are ongoing between Foras na Gaeilge and the Agency to find the right presenter for this programme.

Archive Project

Mr Thompson and Executive are to arrange a convenient date to take this issue forward.

It was noted that Mr Holmes will be travelling to Edinburgh on 9th March 2007 to engage in further research.

Monreagh

(Moved forward from AOB)

After a meeting with all concerned it was agreed that money for this project would be drawn down by the IUSS subject to conditions outlined in the letter of offer.

The letter of offer is to be prepared but will be presented to DCRGA before issue.

Language

Staff at the Agency are arranging an assessment day to identify potential language teachers for the Adult Learning classes that have been put together by the Stranmillis unit.

The Board noted the greater interest in cultural matters, and discussed the danger of forcing language issues prematurely; it was feared that this might actually damage long-term progress in confidence-building in the use of the language, as well as endangering the language's status.

The Executive expressed the hope that in 2007 the Board should see an increase in language applications because of the success of last year's Summer Schools Project, which should lead to increased interest in language matters.

Board members suggested that the Agency should in the near future give a presentation on linguistic issues, and invite staff from DCAL and current stakeholders.

The Board members are also eager to progress with a language event in the South to raise public awareness.

5. Chairman's Report

The Chairman listed the following events that he attended or organisations he had been in contact with since the previous meeting:

- Meeting with Maria Eagle, Minister of Culture re: further funding for the Agency.
- Meeting with RSPBA re: Championship bid for 2010.
- Kent County Council re: Smithsonian event in summer 2007.
- Bruce Trust re: Robert the Bruce Anniversary
- Meeting with Scottish Executive re: Year of Home Coming - Robert Burns 250 years dead
- Meeting with Straightforward Productions re: Plantation film.
- Meeting with BBC representatives re: Language programmes
- Future Search meeting.

Mr Thompson tabled a letter that he received from the Arts Council re: funding for a Project Officer at the Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association ended in September 2006. The Board proposed that the Executive explore partnership funding opportunities.

Proposed: The Board were in agreement

Mr Thompson tabled a letter that he received for Dr Hume of the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland. The Board would be extremely supportive of signage at the site if the Battle of the Boyne being available in Ulster-Scots.

Proposed: Board were in agreement

Mr Thompson has made arrangements to meet with local authorities and community groups in Ayr where the Board will hold the next board meeting.

6. Chief Executive's Report

Mr Patton's report was tabled. He highlighted the following items:

- Item E - After NCSM approaching the Agency to take the lead on the Plantation, Mr Patton and Mr Reaney organised a meeting on this matter at the Everglades Hotel, Derry. There was a great response from Councils and progress had been made.
- Mr Patton attended a meeting organised by NSMC, of all the CEO's of the North South Bodies. There will be a review of all the Bodies efficiency and effectiveness in autumn 2007.

- Mr Patton met with Cathal McManus to discuss proposals for history and genealogical classes to be delivered to the community as part of QUB's commitment to open learning. The Board proposed that the Executive support this project.

Mrs Wilson tabled her report.

7. Budget and Business Plan 2006/7

The accounts for 2006 showed that spending was spent almost according to projections.

There is an ongoing issue about the accounts systems the Agency should be using. Clarification is being sought on whether the Agency should use accrual or cash accounting systems.

8. Grants

(1) Belfast Ulster-Scots Festival 2007

Proposal:	£10,000
Reason:	This festival will run for five days and is a celebration of our shared heritage. The aim is to create a festival through which all ages and aspects of the Ulster-Scots community can come together in celebration of our shared heritage.

The Board proposed that this application be approved for £10,000.

(2) East Donegal Ulster-Scots Association

Proposal:	€14,980
Reason:	This project will promote awareness of Ulster-Scots in Donegal and encourage a wider community to enjoy Ulster-Scots culture and identity.

The Board proposed that this application be approved for €14,960.

(3) Dunloy Accordion Band

Proposal:	£7,200
Reason:	Project – “Commission of Musical Arrangements”. This project will be a core part of concerts and recordings bringing the Ulster-Scots musical culture to a wide range of people.

The Board proposed that this application be held to next meeting as further work by Executive was to be carried out.

(4) Ulster-Scots Folk Orchestra

Proposal:	£6,650
Reason:	

The Board proposed that this application be approved subject to conditions and all necessary paperwork received.

Mr Devenney joined the meeting.

9. Corporate Plan 2008 - 2010

Executive tabled a report on the Public Consultation Meetings to date. Information gained from monitoring the debates was most useful, and will greatly assist the development of the Corporate Plan.

Many people in the community, while greatly interested in Ulster-Scots culture, and appreciative of the Agency's assistance and support, are not yet ready for fullscale language activities.

Schools Drama

The Schools Drama opened in Derry. Board members in attendance were impressed.

Action: Executive to look at having the show recorded.

10 Community Radio Station

The Agency has three community groups signed up for the Radio Show. Promotional materials are still being gathered.

11 New Agency Logo

The Board further discussed the need for a new Agency logo. Ideas are to be presented at the next meeting.

12 Internal Audit Committee

Members of the Internal Audit Committee informed the Board that the Agency had received four out of five high assurances and one partial assurance in the recent Agency audit.

Executive made the Board aware of issues raised around starting salaries in 2006 during which the Agency complied with the financial memorandum. In December 2006 the Agency were advised that the financial memorandum signed in January 2005 should not have included delegated authority for starting salaries.

Primary School Project

Given the resources committed to the Primary School Project, the Audit Committee expressed concern that the website is not yet live. The CEO put forward a number of possible solutions and the Board agreed to give this further consideration at the next meeting.

Action: Update from Executive at next meeting.

Board members were made aware that all travel expense claims should be made to the Agency no more than three months in arrears

13 Staffing

Mr Millar is to return to work on Monday 5th March 2007 with a phased return. The CEO will comply with duty of care to accommodate this.

SEUPB

All posts have now been filled for this project.

Office Space

The Executive outlined their proposals for the Agency to extend its premises, since staff numbers have recently increased, and working conditions would be improved if upgraded accommodation is available.

Proposal: The Board were in agreement for the Executive to proceed.

14 AOB

SEUBP

This item was dealt with at item 13.

Robert the Bruce

A festival will take place at Rathlin on 16th June to celebrate Robert the Bruce 700. Community groups have been invited to get involved with the event.

Languages Arts officer

This job description has been accepted by all organisations involved.

Monreagh

This item was dealt with at item 4.

Links with Maine Ulster-Scots Association

Board agreed that the Executive should work with Mr McReynolds on his proposals, and that funding of up to £1,500 could be available to assist him.

Change to Funding

The Executive reminded the Board of the proposed review of the Agency Financial Assistance Scheme to encourage more Ulster-Scots activity:

- The Agency will still to provide 75% of eligible costs of Ulster-Scot Events.
- Funding of 100% of Ulster-Scots elements up to 75% of total costs.

Outcome of discussion: The Board were in agreement to these proposals.

Language Body Meeting

It was proposed that the Executive arrange a Joint Language Body meeting with Foras na Gaeilge for June 2007.

Action: Executive to organise.

Lord Antrim

Mrs Wilson met with Lord Antrim to input into event of highland Games that have been planned.

Proposal: The Board requested Ms Wilson to investigate further.

15 Date and Venue of Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting would take place in Ayr, Scotland. This will involve a Thursday and Friday night stay over on 29th and 30th March 2007.

SIGNED:

DATED: