

**Tha Boord o Ulster-Scotch
90th Board Meeting
25th June 2009
Foras Na Gaeilge Head Office, Dublin**

Present; Mr Mark Thompson
Mrs Angela Graham
Dr Ian Adamson
Mr William Leathem
Dr William Roulston
Dr Aileen Douglas

In attendance: Mr George Patton
Mr Jim Millar

Recording Secretary; Miss Sarah Lockhart

1. Welcome from the Chairman

Mr Thompson welcomed and thanked everyone for attending the 90th Board Meeting at Foras Na Geailge's Offices, Dublin.

2. Apologies

Apologies were tabled on behalf of Mr William Humphrey, Mrs Jacqui Reed and Arthur Scott. Mr Michael McCullough was on Annual Leave.

3. Minutes

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

Proposed and agreed: that the minutes are accepted.

4. Matters arising

TV Programme

Mr Millar met with representatives from Vinegar Hill to discuss the TV programme. Mr Millar asked for the revised cut to distribute to board members. Upon receipt Mr Millar will copy and dispatch to members. Mr Millar informed the board the new voiceover was David Dugan and there were no major changes to the film. When broadcast is approved a date will be discussed.

Media coverage – Ulster-Scots Folk Orchestra

Mr Millar informed the board of the reasons why Mr Willie Drennan may have made a public attack on the Ulster-Scots Agency. Mr Millar also stated in George and Michael's absence he had spoken with DCAL and had prepared a briefing document. At this point it was agreed to return to this matter at the end of the meeting.

Consultant – First Derry Presbyterian Church

After the last board meeting Mr Scott and Mr Patton met with Mark Lusby to discuss the potential project. Upon further discussions Mr Scott's advice was not to proceed with the project as the work outlined in Mr Lusby's proposal could be carried by Ulster-Scots Agency staff.

Dr Roulston stated that Mr Lusby had established good working relationships with people who could contribute to this project and it would be hard for the Agency staff to start this anew. Mr Leathem reiterated this statement and asked it be re-visited.

Proposed and agreed: The Board examine the project further

Language Promotion Strategy

All board members received a copy of the draft document which is open for discussion. Mr Millar stated he welcomed comments from the board members and suggested a language sub-committee be established for members who have a particular interest in the Ulster-Scots Language. Mr Thompson congratulated Mr Millar on producing the document and suggested targets be prioritised and costings be put against each priority. Mr Millar stated he would be grateful for feedback by the end of August 2009.

Action: Board members to respond by 31st August 2009

5. Audit Update

Copies of the risk register were circulated to board members. Mr Millar informed the board of a meeting with staff from Goldblatt McGuigan on 24 June 2009 which addressed audit risks and ongoing issues. Mr Millar informed the board Mr Thomson is making some amendments to the document asked for by Mr Millar and Mr Scott. When complete it will be circulated to all board members and the Permanent Secretary.

The Board conveyed their thanks and appreciation to staff for their work and noted the limited number of transactions which are causing limited assurances.

Ulster-Scot Newspaper

Mr Patton informed the board that during his trip to America the people there told him a personal copy rather than an emailed version is important to them. Mr Patton also stated a severe pruning of the database needs to be carried out to reduce costs. It was suggested by Mrs Graham that large quantities to a selection of groups and organisations in some Republic of Ireland counties would be worthwhile.

6. Chairman's Report

Community Worker Scheme / Jim Allister / Press Release

Mr Thompson responded to a letter from Jim Allister who then posted Mr Thompson's response on his website and used it as a publication from the Ulster-Scots Agency. Mr Thompson received written instruction from Steven Brimstone to put the letter into the newspaper.

Meeting with John Wilson, Frank Ferguson and Gerry Carruthers

Mr Thompson reported of his meeting at Jordanstown University regarding the publication; '*Revising Burns and Ulster*'.

Meeting with Bready Ulster-Scots

Mr Thompson stated the meeting was very worthwhile and the group were much happier with regard to the Community Worker's Scheme.

Meeting with John O'Keeffe and William Roulston

Mr Thompson and Dr Roulston met with Dr O'Keeffe of the Northern Ireland Environment Agency to discuss areas of mutual interest between the respective organisations. Dr O'Keeffe was appreciative of the work the Agency had done in relation to the Hamilton-Montgomery project and in particular the production of the DVD reprints of the Hamilton and Montgomery Manuscripts.

Meeting with Laura Spence, new Ulster-Scots Producer for BBCNI

Mr Thompson encouraged Board members and Agency staff to maintain good working relationships with Miss Spence.

Meeting with Jim Millar and Lawrence Holden

Meeting with Arthur Scott, George Patton re: CEO Performance Targets

Book Launch – Philip Robinson novel

Mr Thompson attended the launch of Mr Robinson's new novel.

Morning with Eull Dunlop and William Roulston

Mr Thompson met recently with Dr Dunlop and Dr Roulston to visit a number of sites associated with the 1859 Revival in Mid Antrim. Dr Dunlop has proposed writing a couple of articles on the Revival in Mid Antrim for the Ulster-Scots. Mr Thompson has spoken to Billy Kennedy about this.

Willie Drennan letter / Lawrence Holden / BBC

With issues that have occurred in the past, Mr Thompson stressed the need to have a PR Strategy in place in order to deal the media.

7. Report from Executive

The Executives Report was omitted from the pack and not emailed to board members. Mr Patton apologised and will circulate as soon as possible. Mr Patton also welcomed any comments members might have.

Action: Mr Patton to circulate Report as soon as possible

8. Budget and Business Plan

Mr Patton informed the board the budget is being re-profiled as spend is running higher than expected particularly in running costs, however there is a very significant under spend in Grants – FAS. Mr Patton also stated the Ulster-Scots Agency and Foras na Gaeilge have recently prepared a policy on Code of practice which will be produced at the end of the Summer 2009.

Mr Patton then asked everyone to look at Business Targets and welcomed any comments. He also noted the document would not go live until 30th June 2009.

It was noted that a decision was to be made by the end of August 2009 on the future of the Peripatetic Tutors Programme.

Mr Leathem proposed an external consultant carry out a broader client satisfaction survey. Mrs Graham seconded this. All were in agreement.

9. Revised Financial Assistance Scheme

Mr Patton stated the Department of Finance and Personnel had received the revised Financial Assistance Scheme. The Board were happy with Mr Patton's responses.

10. Grants and Appeals

Glenn Comhaltas

Project: Various Musical Workshops

Even though the application for financial assistance is under £3,000 Mr Patton stated it is the first application the Ulster-Scots Agency had ever received from a traditional Irish organisation.

Mr Leathem proposed the application be accepted with the provision that it be monitored very closely.

Proposed and agreed.

Altnaveigh House

Project: Life and Times of John Mitchell

Mr Patton stated the further information sought was sufficient and the Board approved.

Proposed and agreed funding.

11. 2010 Business Plan – Strategic Workshops

The draft was received by the Board.

Action: The Chair, Mr Thompson asked board members to have responses made by the 24th July 2009.

12. Staffing

ASM Horwath

Mr Patton informed the Board of unease and unrest within staff as parts of the document suggest staff will be made redundant. Mr Patton praised and gave staff credit for continuing their hard work.

Mr Patton stated that the staff were of the opinion the consultation occurred in October 2008 and a lot of their suggestions or opinions have been overlooked.

Mr Leathem suggested a further consultation on staff while document is still on draft form and open for discussion. Dr Douglas stated ASM Horwath did what they were asked to do and felt it unnecessary for a further consultation.

Mr Patton expressed the view that the process underway was sufficient in terms of staff consultation.

The Chair, Mr Thompson asked the executive to collate feedback from staff and bring to the Board.

Tribal Helm

Mr Patton informed the board that Mark Fitzsimmons who has been contracted out from Tribal Helm ends his contract with the Ulster-Scots Agency on 31st July 2009. Although the running costs are high Mr Patton suggested discussing with Tribal Helm the potential to contract Mark out at specific times of the month to complete draw downs.

Mr Leathem proposed Mark continue his work with the Agency full time until 31st August 2009 due to summer being a busy time with Summer Schools, Festivals and on the day payments.

Proposed and agreed.

Action: Mr Patton to discuss with Tribal Helm

13. AOB

Country Media Link

The Board were of the opinion this service would have to be tendered for.

NSMC

The next NSMC Meeting is to take place on 9th July 2009. The former and new ministers for DCAL will be present as well as Mark Thompson. The FAS has to be approved.

Fair Faa Ye USA

A copy of the email from Jonathan Burgess was circulated to all board members. Mr Burgess is now asking for the play to be postponed until 2010 due to a number of reasons including funding. Mr Patton stated this extra time would allow the Ulster-Scots Agency to source other potential funders. It was also noted that the envisaged spend of approximately £20,000 will not occur within this year.

Tourism Ireland

Mr Patton informed the board he had met with the Wilderness Road team. The Chair, Mr Thompson suggested the costs be reviewed. Mr Patton asked the board for an interim decision to be made on the style, size and format of the 'Plantation of Ulster' booklet. The Board agreed on an;

A4 – 32 Page booklet (similar to the Plantation of Ulster booklet produced as part of SEUPB project).

Royal Mail door to door distribution

Gillian Gilmore was also to look into a distribution service for Counties Cavan, Monaghan and Donegal.

“Scots Presbyterians on the Frontier”

Mr Patton stated the application does meet the criteria under 'working with others'.

The Board were in agreement to support the project pending the decision at the NSMC Meeting on 9th July 2009.

Public Attitude Survey 2008

It was agreed that language projects need to start at the base level.

Response to Willie Drennan

Although not on the agenda due to the events of the previous days the Chair, Mr Thompson suggested a letter be sent to Mr Willie Drennan and copied to Gareth Gordon and Mark Adair of the BBC. Mr Thompson also stated a statement should not be made in any newspapers.

The Board agreed.

13. Date and venue of Next Meeting

Neither date nor venue was confirmed. It was agreed all board members would circulate possible dates.

Mr Patton and Vice Chair Mrs Graham both took the opportunity to thank Mr Thompson on behalf of all staff and the executive team for his hard work throughout his time as Chairman of the Board.

Signed.....

Date.....