



Ulster-Scots Agency
Boord o Ulstèr-Scotch

Board Decisions 2011

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2011

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**Tha Board O Ulster-Scotch
104th Board Meeting
12 February 2011, 11.30am
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 (joined meeting 12noon)
	Mr Tony Crooks
	Mrs Jacqui Reed
In attendance:	Miss Hazel Campbell (Interim Chief Executive Officer [ICEO])
	Mr Jim Millar (Director of Education and Language)
	Mr Michael McCullough (Director of Corporate Services)
	Mrs Catherine Martin
Recording Secretary:	Ms Lyndsey Hanna

1. Welcome from the Chairperson

1.1 The Chair welcomed members to the 104th meeting of the Board, which was his first meeting as the Chair.

1.2 The Chair gave a brief overview of his other interests and positions. He highlighted that until 2005 he had been a Northern Ireland senior civil servant with Department for Employment and Learning with responsibility for skills, management development and youth training policy.

In November 2005 he became Chair of the Greater Shankill Partnership Board in Belfast leading the partnership on neighbourhood regeneration strategy. He is also a board member of Ormeau Enterprise Ltd, a local enterprise agency, a board member of Intertrade Ireland and is involved with several private and public sector bodies. Lastly the Chair indicated that he is also involved in youth issues through Scouting, Belfast Activity Centre and the Gerry Rogan Initiative Trust.

1.3 The Chair informed the Board that since being appointed he had met with Minister McCausland and he had received positive feedback on the Agency's 2011 Business Plan from the Minister.

1.4 He advised the Board that he was looking forward to the challenge of being Chair of the Agency and is coming into his new position with an open mind. He indicated that he sees the Agency with a lot of potential for modernising.

2. Apologies

2.1 There were no apologies.

3. Minutes of Last Meeting

3.1 Minutes of the meeting of the Board on 16 December 2010 were agreed with one minor amendment. In para 5.3 the word 'persons' to be changed to 'Board members'.

3.2 ***Proposed and Agreed: that the minute be accepted.***

4. Matters Arising

4.1 Miss Campbell informed the Board that all matters arising will be dealt with in the CEO report.

5. Interim Chief Executive Officer's Report

5.1 Miss Campbell provided the Board with feedback she had received from the producers, Evergreen Media Limited, on the programme on the plantation aired on UTV on 15 December 2010 at 11pm. The programme attracted audiences in the range of 118,000 – 128,000 which was viewed as a good result for the time of the transmission. DVD copies of the programme were available to Board members if they missed the programme or wished to see it again. These would be used as an educational resource.

- 5.2 Miss Campbell informed the Board that the first meeting of the Ulster-Scots Forum took place on 3 February 2011, attended by Iain Crozier, Iain Carlisle and Matthew Warwick from the Ulster-Scots Community Network and by Tom Scott, Hilary Singleton and the Agency's Executive team.
- 5.3 Miss Campbell gave an update on the Annual Reports & Accounts. A date for the next Language Body meeting to sign off the consolidated accounts for 2007 is to be confirmed. Board members were asked to provisionally hold 14 April for this meeting to take place in Dublin.
- 5.4 Miss Campbell advised the Board that the Agency has issued 170 letters of offer to date for music tuition in 2011, valued at £255,224 and 34 letters of offer for dance tuition valued at £76,076. Eight applications have been rejected primarily because the applications were incomplete. Two groups have also withdrawn their applications. The Board members were also advised that the Agency is currently behind in tuition claims for 2010 due to the processing of 2011 tuition awards. Miss Campbell indicated that the delay in processing 2010 claims had generated criticism from some groups. She said that she was doing what she could to address the bottleneck in the workload of the grants team.
- 5.5 The Business cases for the grant offers agreed by the Board at its last meeting for the Ulster-Scots Community Network, the Ulster-Scots Language Society and the Ullans Speakers Association have been submitted to the two Sponsor Departments for approval.
- 5.6 Miss Campbell drew the Board's attention to the further correspondence she had received from Mr Sammy Wilson MP MLA on behalf of the Cairncastle Ulster-Scots group. She advised that the Agency cannot pay on the basis that the Agency's offer of financial assistance was turned down, there is no contract in place and no claims have been received. Expenditure in these circumstances would be deemed irregular.

- 5.7 Miss Campbell informed the Board that PWC consultants have been appointed to take forward the competition for the appointment of a new Chief Executive. A Steering Group has been set up to oversee the project comprising our Chairman, Hilary Singleton, Tony Crooks and Arthur Scott from DCAL.
- 5.8 **Mr Leathem joined the meeting at this point.**
- 5.9 Miss Campbell reported on meetings with Community Change Northern Ireland and the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Finance Administration (CIPFA) to discuss the provision of training for core funded groups, community workers and other grant applicants in the areas of governance and managing public money. Proposals are being developed for the Agency's consideration which will be tailored to meet the needs of each group.
- 5.10 Miss Campbell referred to correspondence from both Sponsor Departments detailing the Agency's indicative budgets for the period 2011-2013 which are subject to approval of Finance Ministers and NSMC. It indicated a cut of 9% in 2011 and at least 3% per annum thereafter. The Agency has been asked to resubmit the 2011 Business Plan and draft 2011-2013 Corporate Plans in line with the indicative figures.
- 5.11 Miss Campbell advised that the Department of Culture Arts and Leisure have placed an advertisement in the press seeking a chair and 4 members for the Ulster-Scots Academy Ministerial Advisory Group. The Chair stated that he would like to see Agency representation on the group and this was to be raised with the Minister.
- 5.12 The Executive had attended a meeting with representatives from the National Trust to discuss the new Causeway Visitors Centre. Opportunities for incorporating Ulster-Scots heritage in the exhibitions were discussed and there will be follow up meetings to discuss this further.

ACTION: *Mr Millar.*

5.13 Miss Campbell will be meeting with Dr McGinley from Ilex to discuss possible Ulster-Scots input to the Londonderry City of Culture 2013 plans. A meeting was also arranged with representatives of the First Derry Presbyterian Church, regarding funding of the Interpretative Centre. Mrs Reed informed the Board that the First Derry Presbyterian Church are currently submitting a Peace III application for funding jointly with Monreagh and it may be useful to see this before the Agency agree to any proposal.

ACTION: Miss Campbell.

5.14 Miss Campbell advised that today was the last day for receipt of applications for the Community Workers Scheme. She invited volunteers from the Board to sit on the panel to assess the applications. Mrs Reed nominated herself and Dr Adamson proposed this. The Board will be advised of the Panel's decisions, and any issues will be referred back to the Board for consideration.

ACTION: Mr Millar.

5.15 In relation to the quality assurance of publications in the Ulster-Scots language, Miss Campbell wrote to the Ulster-Scots Language Society, the Ulster-Scots Community Network and the Ullans Speakers Association to convene a meeting to discuss publications planned for 2011 to ensure there is no duplication and also to discuss the possibility of setting up an editorial committee. Nominations have been received from 2 of the groups and an exploratory meeting will be set up.

5.16 Mr Leathem wished to record in the minutes recognition for the work carried out by John Hunter, Interim Chair. The Board were grateful for his guidance during 2010. The Board agreed to write formally to Mr Hunter to thank him for his contribution to the work of the Board.

ACTION: Miss Campbell.

6. Music and Dance Tuition within Communities – Consultation Paper

- 6.1 Mr Millar explained the background to the consultation with stakeholders on options for modifying how the Agency supports the delivery of music and dance tuition within communities.
- 6.2 The Agency had invited a number of umbrella groups to discuss possible options prior to proceeding to public consultation which commenced on 15th October 2010. Some twenty-seven groups responded to the consultation, including local authorities, umbrella bodies and organisations representing groups identified under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and service users.
- 6.3 Mr Millar highlighted to the Board areas where there appeared to be general consensus about possible modifications to the tuition programme as follows:
- There was acceptance across the sector that applications should be determined on merit basis against objective criteria within a transparent process. The system and budget should provide for newly established groups while managing demands on the various funding programmes.
 - New application and reporting requirements supported by training and detailed guidance.
 - Proposed changes to streamline and simplify payment processes were almost universally welcomed.
 - There is an appetite for the extension of the scheme to include more instruments however guidance on Ulster Scots repertoire is essential.
 - The inclusion of an Ulster Scots history and culture lesson within the programme with a focus on the development of particular Ulster-Scots instruments and musical traditions.
 - Enhanced systems to monitor progress including a performance element with significant support for a mechanism to recognise and reward excellence suggestions included an Agency sponsored performance/ competition and an Agency “proficiency test”.

- The provision of “master-classes” and skills development for tutors and judges. There was significant demand for networking opportunities. There were also requests for a directory of participating groups and for a register of tutors.
- Support for actions that increase quality assurance through use of tutors with appropriate accreditation and through the submission of programmes of work with associated lesson plans.

6.4 Miss Campbell indicated that these emerging views were discussed at the meeting of the Forum and the USCN has agreed to provide further comments on the proposals. These had been received and were tabled at the meeting. Mrs Reed expressed concerns that the views of the USCN would not be representative of groups in her area.

6.5 Mrs Singleton suggested that the Agency approach the USCN and ask them for a breakdown of individual responses of those who they were representing as this would be more valuable to the consultation process.

6.6 Mr Leathem said that the issue of excluding band practice needed to be addressed.

6.7 The Board discussed the challenges attached to improving repertoire and possibly accreditation which is not currently available for all genres.

6.8 Mr Millar referred to the work of the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) which was about capturing learning outcomes, and he suggested the submission of lesson plans as a possible way forward.

6.9 Mr Crooks said he would favour a merit approach and fewer awards with clear outcomes, while at the same time being able to support new groups. Mr McLoone agreed with the concept of lessons leading to a curriculum of learning within communities.

6.10 The Chair suggested that there may be merit in a two strand approach – introducing as many people as possible to the music through basic tuition, and through mechanisms to drive up standards and excellence. He also suggested that the Agency needs to modernise its concept of musical tuition by widening the criteria to new instruments which can play Ulster-Scots

tunes. Mrs Singleton said she would like to see established groups show leadership by helping other groups move forward.

- 6.11 In concluding the discussion, the Chair asked the Executive to work up proposals for a new scheme, taking account of the members views.

ACTION: *Mr Millar.*

7. Review of the Financial Assistance Scheme

- 7.1 Miss Campbell informed the Board that Minister McCausland has requested a fundamental review of the Agency's Financial Assistance Scheme to address issues such as higher quality/higher impact authentic Ulster-Scots projects, events and festivals, that the procedures are transparent, easily understandable and accessible by the community and that the scheme facilitates and encourages the development of east west links.
- 7.2 Mrs Singleton was concerned that the timescale for the turnaround of the review of the scheme was just 4 weeks. Other members were concerned that the emphasis on fewer higher quality projects would exclude smaller groups which were possibly capable of growing and achieving a higher impact through time.
- 7.3 Miss Campbell said that although the timescale was challenging, the FAS needs re-written urgently in any case as the Agency is not currently implementing all the requirements as stated on assessment procedures.
- 7.4 The Chair said that the Scheme should be modernised and should be less prescriptive, and more enabling. Detailed assessment processes should be contained in supplementary guidance which can be updated as necessary.

7.5 Mrs Reed queried the geographical coverage and asked if projects in other parts of Ireland, outside Ulster, would be eligible. Miss Campbell referred to the Agency's statutory remit which refers to the 'island of Ireland'.

ACTION: *It was agreed that Miss Campbell would draft an update of the FAS for the next meeting identifying deficiencies and omissions in the current scheme.*

8 Monreagh Funding Application

8.1 Mrs Reed left the meeting at this point.

8.2 Miss Campbell informed the Board that to date the Agency has not provided any of its own funds for the Monreagh project. In 2007 an agreement was reached whereby the Department of Community Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs routed funding through the Agency for 2 projects as follows:

- To the Institute of Ulster-Scots Studies (IUSS) for the Monreagh project – €118,922 for 3 years commencing December 07
- To the Monreagh Manse Committee to refit and refurbish the Manse for the Monreagh project – €77,078 for 3 years commencing December 07

8.3 DCEGA has now advised the Agency that no further additional funds would be made available and therefore a partnership funding agreement with the Southern Department is no longer an option. Board members expressed their concerns that the Agency has been left in this position.

8.4 The Chair indicated that the review of the Financial Assistance Scheme would have to consider the policy for core-funded groups and hence he recommended an interim award for 1 year without prejudice to future funding.

8.5 Miss Campbell advised that there has been a significant increase in the budgets submitted by Monreagh since November 2009, particularly with regard to employee costs. Initially funding was sought for 2 posts, and this has now increased to 4 posts. Board members re-affirmed their view that the Centre Manager post was critical to the success of the organisation.

8.6 After further discussion the Board agreed in principle to put in place interim funding of €90k, to be allocated as follows:

- Project Manager €35,000
- Support staff €20,000
- Administration/programme costs €35,000

8.7 It was also agreed that for interim funding to proceed, all posts should be subject to open competition with a list of essential and desirable criteria, that strict evaluation and monitoring procedures should be put in place, and any governance issues had to be addressed.

8.8 Miss Campbell advised that a business case for the funding would have to be referred to the two Sponsor Departments for approval.

ACTION: Miss Campbell.

8.9 **The Board adjourned for lunch and Mrs Reed rejoined the meeting.**

9 Revised 2011 Business Plan

9.1 Miss Campbell informed the Board that revisions have been made to the Agency's 2011 Business Plan following receipt of comments from the Sponsor Departments and taking into account the new indicative budgets. She highlighted the main changes in the document. These changes were accepted and noted by the Board.

9.2 Mrs Reed asked for clarification on the key target under 4.5 of the Business Plan. Mr Millar advised Mrs Reed that the Agency was not in a position to proceed with strategic work on education until there was further clarification from DCAL on the remit of the Ulster-Scots Academy.

9.3 Mrs Singleton advised the Board that she noted a news story in the national press regarding new GSCE subjects in schools which will compare different cultures. She suggested that Mr Millar explore this with CCEA.

ACTION: Mr Millar to follow up and provide feedback at next meeting.

9.4 The Chair congratulated the Executive team on the work on the 2011 Business Plan.

10 Policies

10.1 Mrs Martin introduced the policy documents presented for approval. The Freedom of Information Policy and Procedures was agreed without amendment.

10.2 Mrs Singleton recommended a number of changes to both the Appeals Policy and the Discipline and Grievance Procedures. The Board were in agreement to the amendments.

11/12 Marketing Report and Marketing and Communications Activity Plan

11.1 Both papers were noted and approved.

13/14 Draft 2011 Budget and Finance report

13.1 Mr McCullough presented the outturn report for 2010, the proposed budget allocation for 2011 and the expenditure to date. He explained that the 2010 under spend was due to some community groups not claiming grants under the financial assistance scheme before the end of 2010. This would create some pressure on the 2011 cash budget.

13.2 Mr McCullough said that the low spend in January 2011 was due to the grants team being unable to process the outstanding tuition claims for 2010 due to the workload associated with processing grants for 2011.

15 Staff Contracts

15.1 Mr McCullough informed the Board that the Agency has engaged BDO consultants on behalf of the North South Language Body to produce a generic set of employment contracts for staff

in the Agency. The current position sees staff employed by the Agency (and Foras) on heads of terms but without contracts.

15.2 Mr Crooks advised members that this is a priority 1 issue raised by the Audit Office on the Agency's 2006 accounts.

15.3 The Board members were asked to forward any comments on this paper to Miss Campbell for discussion with Foras na Gaeilge, in advance of the next meeting of the Language Body.

ACTION: Board Members.

16 Armagh GAA

16.1 Mr Millar tabled this paper at the meeting. In December 2010 Armagh GAA contacted the Agency seeking to explore aspects of the Ulster-Scots culture. The Armagh GAA 2008-2012 Strategic Plan for development states that that they wish to *'Form links with the Ulster-Scots Agency with the view to organising joint cultural events and activities'*.

16.2 The Board agreed in principle to providing financial support of around £1,000 to Ulster-Scots performers to participate in the cultural showcase.

ACTION: Mr Millar.

17. Joint Working with East Ayrshire Council

17.1 Mrs Singleton left the meeting at this point.

17.2 Mr Millar tabled this paper at the meeting. He advised the Board that East Ayrshire Council have commissioned Northern Ireland composer Kevin O'Connell to look at the similarities and differences between Scottish and Irish music through a partnership project. East Ayrshire Council wished to work jointly with an Ulster-Scots fiddle orchestra, and Mid-Armagh Community Network fiddle orchestra was identified as a suitable partner.

- 17.3 The Board supported the educational benefits of the project and agreed in principle that the Agency should fund the travel costs of the school children from Ulster participating on the project.

18 AOB

18.1 Partisan Productions

18.1.1 Mr Millar explained that this group had previously received an offer of financial assistance from the Agency of £20,000 as part of a £71,000 project to present public performances of James Hogg's play, 'The Confessions of a justified Sinner.' A grant of £27,300 had also been awarded to the group by the ACNI to jointly fund this project. Delivery had been planned for the period September 2010 to March 2011. In the event, it proved difficult for the group to secure the necessary spread of venues and inclusion in winter programmes. The programme did not run during this period.

18.1.4 On February 4th the group contacted the Agency indicating that a revised schedule of tour dates and locations was now established and that they were requesting that the grant of £20,000 be carried over into this period. They further indicated that the original grant from ACNI of £27,300 had been confirmed for this period. The revised total budget for this project is now £59,540, some £10,000 less than that previously indicated in the original business plan.

18.1.5 Mr Millar recommended an amended offer of £10,000 from the Agency in recognition of the reduced costs of the project.

18.1.6 This was approved by the Board.

18.2 Agency publication "A Word of Ulster Scots" by Liam Logan.

Dr Adamson queried why there was a delay in circulating the Agency's most recent publication "A Word of Ulster Scots" by Liam Logan and he sought members support for a launch of the book. Some members had no knowledge of the book as the issue was not on the Agenda. The Chair agreed to address the matter.

Action: *Mr Scott*

18.3 Other papers circulated for Board members information were:

- Final outturn against the 2010 Business Plan targets;
- Contingency arrangements in event of any Flu Pandemic.

18.4 Mrs Reed asked if the Board will have any representation at the Milwaukee Irish Fest 2011. Mr McCullough said that he was developing a partnership project with others including Tourism Ireland and he would present the details at the next Board meeting.

ACTION: Mr McCullough.

18.5 Mr McLoone proposed that a schedule of meetings for the year be put in place. The Chair will look at this for the next meeting.

18.6 Miss Campbell informed the Board that Mrs Martin would be returning to DCAL at the end of next week and her time with the Agency has come to an end.

19 Date of Next Meeting

19.1 It is proposed to hold the next Board meeting on 24 March 2011 at the Agency offices. Members will be advised if the Audit committee is to meet on the same date.

Signed:

Dated:

**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 amendment.

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
- Loghinsholin – 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:

**Tha Board O Ulster-Scotch
106th Board Meeting
14 April 2011, 10.30am
Foras na Gaeilge Board Room, Dublin**

Present:	Mr Tom Scott (Chair)
	Mrs Angela Graham (Vice-Chair)
	Mrs Hilary Singleton
	Mrs Jacqui Reed
	Mr Michael McLoone
	Mr Tony Crooks
In attendance:	Miss Hazel Campbell (Interim Chief Executive Officer [ICEO])
Recording Minutes:	Mr Michael McCullough (Director of Corporate Services)

1. Welcome from the Chairperson

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed members to the 106th meeting of the Board. The Executive left the meeting while the Chair updated the Board on progress on the appointment of a new Chief Executive. The Board endorsed the candidate proposed by the Selection Panel and noted that the appointment required the approval of the North South Ministerial Council.

2. Apologies

- 2.1 Apologies were received from Dr Adamson, Mr Leathem and Mr Millar.

3. Minutes of last Meeting

- 3.1 Minutes of the meeting of the Board on 24 March 2011 were agreed without amendment.

4. Matters Arising

- 4.1 Miss Campbell circulated information provided by DCAL on appointments to the Ministerial Advisory Group. This included the Terms of Reference drawn up by DCAL for the appointments process. Mr Scott advised members that the first meeting of the group will take place on 12 May 2011. The group will identify quick win projects and their strategic projects.

There will be a need for the work of the Group and the Agency to complement each other and move in the same direction. In response to a question from Mrs Reed, Mr Scott clarified that the remit of the Advisory group did not extend outside Northern Ireland.

- 4.2 Miss Campbell circulated a planned list of publications by the Agency and the Core Funded Groups. Some publications are still to be confirmed by the Ulster-Scots Community Network. The issue around quality assurance of the translation of publications into Ulster-Scots is an ongoing issue with no clear consensus as there is no set Ulster-Scots dictionary or language standard in place. Mr Scott suggested that an external Quality Assurance Group should be vested in the Academy.
- 4.3 Miss Campbell reported that the two sponsor Departments had approved the business cases for the Ullans Speakers Association and the Ulster-Scots Language Society. They also approved core funding to the Ulster-Scots Community Network subject to specific conditions which will be outlined in their letter of offer. The business case for Monreagh has not yet been approved by Sponsor Departments. The Agency has advised Monreagh to progress the process for recruitment of the two posts but the actual appointments must not be made until a letter of offer is in place.
- 4.4 A suspected fraud case which has been pending a court case has now been withdrawn on direction of the Public Prosecution Service.
- 4.5 The Language Body Accounts for 2007 will be signed off today at the Joint Language Body meeting. The NIAO has raised a number of issues regarding the 2008 Accounts and the Executive are keen to resolve them as soon as possible. The 2009 Accounts are still work in progress.
- 4.6 Mrs Singleton reported that she has attended the most recent Pat & Plain Play produced by Dan Gordon "*Sit there for the present*" at Lisnadill Primary School. She was impressed by the energetic performance, enthusiasm and the learning experiences of 1950's education and culture performed by the children. Mr McCullough explained that Lisnadill Primary School were identified for the project as they were currently partaking in Ulster-Scots dance tuition and that they plan to keep Ulster-Scots activities in the School programme. Mrs Graham indicated that she would wish to see schools in the South participate in the schools drama

project. Mr McCullough explained that efforts to do this had been made but there was no uptake. Feedback and views on the next stage are to be sought from the programme organisers Dan Gordon and Philip Crawford.

ACTION: *Mr McCullough*

5. Interim CEO Report

- 5.1 A copy of the interim CEO report was circulated in the papers and Board members noted this.
- 5.2 The draft Audit & Risk Sub-Committee minutes of 24 March 2011 were also circulated and noted.

6. Staff Contracts

- 6.1 Mr McCullough presented a generic draft staff contract which has been prepared by BDO Consultants. There were two versions – one for staff based in the North and one for staff based in the South. These would apply to all staff of the Language Body as appropriate. Mr McCullough explained that Foras na Gaeilge were not yet in a position to recommend the draft to the Language Body for approval. However, as this was an outstanding Priority 1 audit issue for the Agency, he was keen to progress implementation in the Agency, subject to any comments from the Agency’s legal advisors and the Sponsor Departments.

Mr McLoone referred to paragraph 1 and indicated that the distinction between permanent and fixed term or short term contracts and the legal implications would need to be clearly understood by the Agency management and the individual signing the contract. He also suggested that there should be a fixed period after the end of the probationary period to allow for completion of the performance assessment prior to confirmation of the appointment. Mr McCullough agreed to consider these points.

ACTION: *Mr McCullough*

7. Festival Consultation and Festival Funding Awards

- 7.1 Miss Campbell reported on the consultation responses received from Stakeholders on the proposed changes to awarding grants to festivals and she indicated that the key issues have been reflected in the review of Financial Assistance Scheme which was tabled later in the meeting.
- 7.2 She then presented the proposed awards for festivals for the period up to end July 2011. Mr Scott declared an interest in the Spectrum Centre Project but recognised that the Board were only required to approve awards over £5k so this had no impact on decisions to be made.
- 7.3 Miss Campbell explained that some of the awards recommended were maximum awards and that some queries were outstanding.
- 7.4 Miss Campbell recommended that a letter of offer would not be issued to Cairncastle until outstanding issues relating to the accounts for 2010 were resolved. This was agreed by the Board.
- 7.5 The Board were in agreement that the Agency needed to ensure that those groups who are in receipt of funding through the Community Workers Scheme have appropriate training in managing and accounting for public funds.
- 7.6 Mr Scott suggested that the role of the Ulster-Scots Community Network to assist in this should be discussed at the next Forum meeting.

ACTION: *Miss Campbell*

- 7.7 The Board approved the proposed funding awards outlined in the paper.

8. Review of Financial Assistance Scheme

- 8.1 Miss Campbell thanked the Board members for their comments on the Financial Assistance Scheme. She highlighted the key changes made to the document since the last meeting, including proposals to provide limited support for travel outside Ireland. The Board agreed that the criteria for such travel needed to be tightly worded.

8.2 Following discussion the Board approved the revised draft.

8.3 Miss Campbell explained that this would be shared with the Forum at its next meeting scheduled for 21 April 2011 and following that the draft would be sent to the Sponsor Departments for consideration.

ACTION: *Miss Campbell*

9. Playhouse Project

10.1 The Board noted the request to provide a funding contribution to the Playhouse to commission and tour a new play on the life and legacy of Stephen Collins Foster.

10.2 The Board agreed to support the play up to £8,700 subject to the Executive being content with the level of Ulster-Scots content.

10.3 The Board also wished to see the play toured in the South.

ACTION: *Mr Millar*

11. RSPBA

11.1 The Board noted the proposal from RSPBA to widen the scope of their piping competitions to include other aspects of Ulster-Scots culture.

11.2 The Board approved a maximum award of £19,661 to support their summer programme.

12. Finance report

12.1 The Finance report was noted.

12.2 Mr Scott indicated that he wished to review access to the Visitors Centre and to consider the Raphoe Office at a future meeting.

ACTION: *Mr McCullough*

13. Marketing Report

- 13.1 The Marketing Report was noted and the proposed programme for May and June 2011 was agreed.
- 13.2 Mrs Reed advised she would forward her availability to Gillian to assist at the Moira Games fair in May 2011.

14. Draft Customer Charter

- 14.1 Miss Campbell presented the Draft Customer Charter which was agreed and approved.

15. AOB and Community Workers Scheme: Follow up with Fermanagh Groups

- 15.1 Miss Campbell reported that following the discussion at the last Board meeting, Mr Derek Reaney, Development Officer had met with representatives from South East Fermanagh Foundation, Fermanagh Bands Forum, Erne Highland Dancers and 2 other cultural groups who were willing to come together to deliver a programme of Ulster-Scots activities which could be facilitated by a community worker, and from which a new group would be constituted.
- 15.2 Subject to the proposals outlined, the Board approved funding a Community Worker for the Fermanagh Ulster-Scots Group for up to 15 hours per week. Monitoring for this scheme is to be put in place.

ACTION: *Mr Millar*

16. Date of Next Meeting

- 16.1 The next Board meeting will be held at 10.30am on 26 May 2011 and the venue is to be confirmed.

16.2 It was proposed that future Board meetings would be held in various locations.

Signed:

Dated:

Tha Board O Ulster-Scotch
107th Board Meeting
26 May 2011, 10.30am
Ulster-Scots Agency Board Room, Belfast.

Present:	Mr Tom Scott (Chair)
	Dr Ian Adamson
	Mrs Hilary Singleton
	Mrs Jacqui Reed
	Mr Michael McLoone
	Mr Tony Crooks
	Mr William Leathem
In attendance:	Miss Hazel Campbell
	Mr Jim Millar
	Mr Arthur Scott (DCAL)
Recording Minutes:	Ms Lyndsey Hanna

1. Welcome from the Chairperson

1.2 The Chairman welcomed members to the 107th meeting of the Board.

2. Apologies

2.1 Apologies were received from Mrs Angela Graham and Mr Michael McCullough.

3. Minutes of last Meeting

3.1 Minutes of the meeting of the Board on 14 April 2011 were agreed with amendment to one typo error at point 6.1.

4. Matters Arising

4.1 Miss Campbell reported that feedback from the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) on the Staff Contracts suggested that there was no need for the Agency to have separate contracts from that of the NICS. However, Miss Campbell advised the Board that the Agency should proceed with staff contracts as this was a Priority 1 action point in an NIAO Audit

Report. Mrs Singleton felt that there would be a legal requirement on the Body, as employer, to have contracts in place.

ACTION: *Mr McCullough*

5. Chairman's Business

- 5.1 Mr Tom Scott, Chairman, advised that a candidate for the CEO position has been identified, however, approval was needed by NSMC and the next meeting for languages will not take place until 7 July 2011. He was pressing the NSMC Secretariat to seek approval at an earlier meeting.

Mr Arthur Scott, DCAL joined the meeting.

- 5.2 Mr Scott provided the Board with an update on the new Ulster-Scots Academy Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG). The MAG was established to provide advice on the strategic development of the Ulster-Scots sector and will be progressing projects under three streams of activity including heritage and language issues and research. The Group held their first meeting last month and a list of potential projects was being prepared. The Group will have funding of £1m per annum. Mr Scott felt it would be important to the work of the MAG complimented the Agency.

- 5.3 Mr Arthur Scott added that a partnership approach with MAG and a co-ordinated strategy for the sector will be important which taps into the expertise of the various interests across the sector.

ACTION: *Mr Tom Scott to circulate papers from the first meeting and details of the remit of the group.*

- 5.3 Mr Scott advised that Miss Campbell represented the Agency at an event in Dublin attended by the Queen during her visit to Ireland. Miss Campbell said that it was a privilege to be invited to this historic occasion shared with the other CEO's from North South Bodies.

- 5.4 Mr Arthur Scott addressed the Board and reflected on priorities for the Department since the appointment of the new Minister for Culture, Caral Ni Chuilin. He stated that the new Minister will be keen to assist communities in jobs creation/cultural tourism. Mr Scott indicated that there would be further consideration of the commitments in the St Andrew's agreement re language and culture. In the current economic climate the budgets of the cross-b order bodies would continue to be tightly scrutinised with a focus on outcomes and value for money. The Department will welcome the re-structuring of the Financial Assistance Scheme to improve transparency and drive up quality. The new Minister will wish to be assured that there is effective governance in place and that the legacy issues have been addressed.
- 5.5 In response to questions Mr Tom Scott clarified that while the Academy remit was restricted to Northern Ireland, the group were keen to work in partnership with others providing there was a clear requirement for the project supported by a business case.
- 5.6 Mrs Singleton asked if the remit of the Advisory Group included Quality Assurance of language material. Mr Arthur Scott said that he would advise on this.
- 5.7 Dr Adamson queried if the Advisory Group would be working in partnership with Universities and Mr Scott replied advising that the Advisory Group is currently looking at possibilities. Mr McLoone asked about the interface with education, development of the curriculum and how the work with Monreagh and the Institute of Ulster-Scots Studies would be positioned. It was suggested that Mr Bill Smith, Chairman of the Advisory Group could be invited to attend a future Agency Board meeting to address member's queries.

ACTION: Miss Campbell to follow up.

- 5.8 Dr Adamson further asked if the meetings would be minuted in the Ulster-Scots language. Mr Arthur Scott advised that currently there were no plans to do this and he will feedback this point to the Advisory Group. Mr McLoone felt that the Advisory Group should address this issue early in their deliberations.
- 5.9 Mrs Reed suggested that the Agency explore the re-opening of the relationship the Agency previously had with Magee College, University of Ulster after funding for the project ceased.

Mr McLoone also thought this would be beneficial to the Agency. The Chairman advised that he would pick the matter up and report to the Board at a future meeting.

ACTION: Mr Scott

Mr Arthur Scott left the meeting at this point.

6. CEO Report

6.1 Miss Campbell advised the Board members that letters of offer had now been issued to all Core-Funded Groups. Mr McCullough is assisting Monreagh with the recruitment of staff. Corporate Governance training was held on Tuesday 17 May 2011 for all Core-Funded groups and there was representation from all groups in attendance. Goldblatt McGuigan will provide feedback on the training.

6.2 2008 Accounts

Miss Campbell advised that she had received a Draft Management Letter from NIAO outlining a number of issues of irregular expenditure in relation to the 2008 Accounts. These potential irregularities amounted to almost £0.5m and included a lack of approval for Agency spend above delegated limits, issues of non-compliance with FAS guidelines, no business case for new premises, no business case for fit-out of the Visitor Centre, paying rent for other groups sharing the premises, lack of supporting documentation for SEUPB project resulting in the claims being rejected by SEUPB.

6.3 Mrs Reed said that at no point during 2008 as a member of the Board was she advised or made aware that a Business Case needed approval prior to any of this spend.

6.4 Mr McLoone asked to what extent the Board members will be involved in the reply to the Draft Management Letter. Miss Campbell explained that the Agency had a right to reply and she would respond to the draft. There would then be a follow up meeting with the Auditors to discuss any points of contention before the final report would be issued. The issues will be raised firstly with the Audit and Risk Committee before going to the Board.

6.5 Miss Campbell suggested that some of the issues may have arisen due to the Agency not having the resources and capabilities to carry out all work to the required standards. She

will be meeting with DCAL on Friday 27 May 2011 to discuss the Agency staffing position and the pressures currently facing the Agency.

6.6 Miss Campbell informed the Board that there had been approval from the Sponsor Departments to run a trawl within NICS for a third Director to find a candidate with public sector expertise. This should help to strengthen Agency capability on finance and governance matters.

6.7 Mr Crooks highlighted that the staff complement shows as a RED ALERT in the Agency Risk Register. He suggested that the Board as a whole should consider the Risk Register as well as the Audit and Risk Committee.

ACTION: *Executive to table the Risk Register once per quarter to the Board.*

6.8 A further issue highlighted in the Draft Management Letter was the breach of EU regulations in the publishing of the Ulster-Scot Newspaper. The Agency is currently awaiting approval from Sponsor Departments to the business case, following which the services will be tendered.

ACTION: *Mr McCullough*

6.9 Mr Scott advised of his plans that the Visitor Centre will become the first point of call for all visitors to the Agency HQ from July 2011.

ACTION: *Mr McCullough*

7. Festival Awards

7.1 Mr Millar presented a table setting out the recommendations on awards for the outstanding 2011 festivals. He advised that the current total of committed spend for festivals was nearly £180k, and was above the allocated budget of £170k.

7.2 The Board approved the projects presented.

7.3 Mrs Reed queried the reason for no festivals being funded in the Border counties. Mr Millar advised that there were no applications received. He was concerned about this and two

Development Officers are currently seeking events for the Agency to showcase at in the Border counties. Mr McLoone said that he would be happy to assist in identifying such events as he has some knowledge of contacts in the Donegal areas. Mr Scott said that he was keen for Agency staff to work with groups in the Border areas to develop projects.

ACTION: *Mr Millar to follow up with Development Officers.*

8. Other Projects

8.1 Celtic Force Enterprises

This project was agreed in principle subject to a plan of activity and budget details to be approved by the Board.

ACTION: Mr McCullough to present a *more detailed report at the next meeting.*

8.2 Lurgan Junior High School Project

This school project will promote Ulster-Scots culture using new media technology and a link will be provided to the Agency website. The funding requested for this project is £10k of the £60k overall cost to deliver. The Board agreed to approve this project in principle subject to a process being put in place to quality assure the Ulster-Scots content and learning outcomes. Also, further information was requested on how the project fits into the school curriculum if the resource would be available for other schools, and the protocols for school visits. Mrs Singleton advised that she was willing to get involved and meet with the project team to help take forward.

ACTION: *Mr McCullough*

9. Finance Report

9.1 The Board noted the spend to date and the significant level of funds already committed in 2011.

9.2 Mr Leathem asked what monitoring is currently taking place for the Community Workers Scheme. Mr Millar advised that the Agency receives both monthly and quarterly reports. Mr

Leathem asked for a paper on the outputs from each scheme to be presented at the next meeting.

ACTION: *Mr Millar*

10. Marketing updates

- 10.1 The Board noted the marketing plans for the May Bank holiday weekend and June 2011. The third edition of the 'Oot an Aboot' magazine was circulated.
- 10.2 A second paper was circulated with additional information on the Fleadh Ceoil taking place in August 2011. The Agency will spend £3k to showcase at this event and Foras na Gaeilge will contribute £1.5k. The Board approved this event.
- 10.3 Miss Campbell advised that following approval at the last meeting for partnership work with the Ulster Orchestra, the Burns Concert was now in their new programme of events for 2011/2012 which has recently been released.

11. Progress against Business Plan Targets

- 11.1 Miss Campbell reported that the majority of the targets in the Business Plan were on target.
- 11.2 Mrs Singleton said that she would like to see the Agency prepare a showcase of Ulster-Scots culture, history, drama and language involving the community and academics aimed at Schools. While Miss Campbell supported this proposal in principle, she cautioned on the Agency's capacity to deliver such a project at present. She suggested that the Agency could approach National Museums to discuss working in partnership on a project of this nature.

ACTION: *Mr Millar*

12. AOB

- 12.1 There was no other business discussed.

13. Date and venue of Next

16.2 The date of the next meeting was undecided and a range of suggested dates are to be circulated to Board members.

Signed:

Dated:

**Tha Board O Ulster-Scotch
108th Board Meeting
8 July 2011, 10.30am
Ulster-Scots Agency Board Room, Belfast.**

Present:	Mr Tom Scott (Chair)
	Dr Ian Adamson
	Mrs Hilary Singleton
	Mrs Jacqui Reed
	Mr Michael McLoone
	Mrs Angela Graham
Apologies:	Mr Tony Crooks
	Mr William Leathem
In attendance:	Miss Hazel Campbell
	Mr Jim Millar
	Mr Ian Crozier
Recording Minutes:	Mr Michael McCullough

1. Welcome from the Chairperson

1.3 The Chairman welcomed members to the 108th meeting of the Board. He also welcomed Mr Crozier to his first meeting as the CEO. Mr Crozier commenced at the Agency as the CEO on 5 July 2011. He also thanked Miss Campbell for giving up holiday time to attend the meeting.

1.4 There was no declaration of interest in any business declared from Members with the exception of Mrs Singleton advising that she had links to MACN.

2. Apologies

2.1 Apologies were received from Mr Crooks and Mr Leathem.

3. Minutes of last Meeting

3.1 Minutes of the meeting of the Board on 26 May 2011 were agreed and accepted with the exception of a few typos to be corrected.

4. Matters Arising

4.1 The Chair provided the members with a brief update of his activity since the last meeting. This included:

- Attending a meeting with MAG which Miss Campbell attended on behalf of the Agency. The main discussion was how best the Agency could use its resources in line with MAG.
- Attending NSMC meeting on 7 July 2011 with Mr Crozier who delivered a brief overview of the work of the Agency which was prepared by Mr Millar.
- Meeting with Minister Dennaghan at the Agency on 6 July 2011.

4.2 Matters Arising

- The Agency Financial Assistance Scheme Review has been approved subject to both Finance Departments agreement.
- Minister Ní Chuilín had raised a few queries on the Agency's 2008 Accounts related to legacy issues. The issue of lateness of the accounts was raised by Southern Ministers and plans are currently in place with Foras na Gaeilge to move the issue forward quickly.
- The next NSLB meeting is scheduled for 2 December 2011 at potentially Stormont or Belfast City Hall.
- The Chair reported that Minister Ní Chuilín asked NSMC to record Miss Campbell's work with the Agency.

4.3 CEO Report

- The Interim CEO tabled a paper on the Community Workers Scheme and the Border Counties Development Plan activity.
- Attached was the Statement of Internal Control with an accounts update, NIAO letter and provisional audit findings. The Agency response was also attached and the issue of the silence on grant delegation within the FAS was highlighted.
- Attached was a letter received from Sponsor Departments in relation to a number of legacy issues and the Agency response showing areas addressed and areas still to be addressed.

- Mr McLoone raised the issue of the need to clarify the position re: delegations. Recognition of need to recognise the clarification on governance and need to keep the Board apprised of governance arrangements.
- Mrs Singleton suggested that there was a need for the Board to understand the operating arrangements within the Financial Memorandum.
- The Chair also advised that the NIAO have been told that completion date of the 2008 Accounts is September 2011 and consolidation for signing off is at the North South Language Body meeting on 2 December 2011.
- Under staffing, the Chair informed the Board that there would be no change in staffing likely to be agreed by the Departments. A third Director has been approved and recruited Aubrey Scott is to commence as Director of Corporate Services from 15 August 2011 and there will also be a six month secondment/interchange opportunity to fill a post of Grants Manager.
- Miss Campbell highlighted the draft report she received from the Ombudsman. This highlighted some amendments needed to general administration within the Agency, however, there was no substantial failings. The Agency is to issue an apology to those involved on receipt of the final report.
- Mr Crozier thanked Miss Campbell for bringing him up to speed on current Agency issues with a huge emphasis on governance. He stated that he would like to see an increased emphasis on marketing so that key people can see the good work of the Agency. Mr Crozier will be addressing what he and the Executive can do to assist the Board in their overseeing role.

4.4 **ACTION:** *Executive*

5. Report from Audit and Risk Committee

- 5.1 This paper was tabled. Mr Crooks was not present so Miss Campbell talked through the papers and advised that it was important to note the grants database weaknesses outlined in the report.

6. Update on suspected Fraud Cases

- 6.1 This paper was tabled and noted. Board members are to give consideration to the use of tutors who are members of the group.

7. Appeal from Altnaveigh

- 7.1 The letter from Altnaveigh house re: Community Workers scheme was tabled.
- 7.2 Mrs Singleton suggested that consideration cannot be given to taking forward funding until the Agency receives all outstanding information on queries raised.
- 7.3 The Chair referred to the groups grant funding which was not well documented in their accounts. The decision was taken to ensure that the group received no further funding while the dance school is still part of the organisation and until accounts issues are resolved.
- 7.4 **ACTION: CEO**

8. Funding of Cairncastle Festival

- 8.1 The letter of offer outlining funding for Cairncastle Festival has been held back until the 2010 accounts issue is resolved. The Inter-Agency approach to the 2011 Festival will safeguard funding, 50% of eligible festival invoices will be paid pre-accounts and the Agency will be in a position to withhold the other 50% until the 2011 Accounts are presented to charitable status.

9. Report on Community Workers Scheme

- 9.1 The paper on this item outlined the progress of all groups. Some concern was noted in relation to technical issues with East Belfast group who have not been pro-active in delivering Business Plans.
- 9.2 Groups involved in the scheme continue to perform at different levels depending on hours, skills and ambition. Positive feedback to the programme had been received and all but two groups attended the review meeting.

9.3 A further evaluation of the Community Workers Scheme progress is needed prior to the Agency presentation of business cases for future funding. All groups who receiving funding under the Community Workers Scheme forward monthly reports to the Agency prior to payments being issued.

9.4 **ACTION:** *Executive*

10. Monitoring of Grants – Options Paper

10.1 A paper was tabled on the monitoring of grants as a necessary part of the work of the Agency. In 2010, 6 cases of suspected fraud were identified and remedial action has been taken through the Central Investigation Services [CIS] team in all six instances. The weakness around monitoring and verification of grants is highlighted in the risk register.

10.2 At present all summer schools and festivals over £3k are monitored by Development Officers. There is currently a difficulty with the number of music and dance tuition programmes for DO's to cover.

10.3 Changes approved to music and dance programme 20 week music/30 week dance have reduced the number of applicants to 300 plus groups to be monitored. During the monitoring Development Officer's look at a group's Child Protection Policy and the number of students in attendance. However, they have no expertise in music and dance to properly monitor its quality.

10.4 The Board was asked to consider 4 proposals for new arrangements for the monitoring of music and dance tuition in 2012. These included:

- Development of new procedures for the monitoring of Music and Dance [M&D] tuition;
- Increasing the scope and frequency of Monitoring visits by DOs to between 50% - 75%;
- Delegating responsibility for Monitoring to the Ulster Scots Community Network;
- Commissioning an external organisation to undertake Monitoring visits of all M&D grants.

- 10.5 Mrs Reed suggested that an increased usage of Board members could be used to carry out part of the monitoring function of the tuition classes.
- 10.6 Mr Crozier suggested that the Agency research how other funders carryout their monitoring function and providing quality assurance.
- 10.7 The Board endorsed the paper and proposed that the Executive carry out further additional research looking at output as well as inputs. This should lead to a better understanding of the sector and the volunteer capacity/skills.
- 10.8 **ACTION:** *Executive*

11. Activity in Border Counties

- 11.1 At the previous Board meeting, members identified a significant decrease in the number of Festival applications being received in 2011 from Counties Monaghan, Cavan and Donegal. Concern in relation to this diminishing activity and a possible reduced level of general Ulster-Scots activity in these areas poses questions for the work of the Agency.
- 11.2 Mr Millar suggested that there was a need for an Action Plan for the Agency to become proactive once again in these areas. This plan was proposed in a paper to the Board.
- 11.3 Both Mrs Graham and Mrs Reed welcomed the paper but identified a huge amount of work needed to be done to re-connect with groups in the Border areas and to address the potential community apathy.
- 11.4 The Board endorsed the paper and the proposed action plan.
- 11.5 The Board agreed that the Agency is to make necessary contacts with key people from Border Counties to assist in the implementation of the Action Plan.
- 11.6 **ACTION:** *Mr Crozier*

11.7 It was also suggested that the Executive should notify both Ministers that the Agency will be participating at the Fleadh programme.

12. Policies for Approval

12.1 These policies were revised in line with DCAL policy amendments and need approval:

- Fraud Prevention Policy
- Fraud Response Plan
- Procurement Policy and Procedures

12.2 All policies were approved by the Board.

13. Update on Partnership Projects

13.1 The Board previously sought clarification on 2 projects which were supported in principle at the May 2011 meeting. These included:

- Lurgan Junior High
- Celtic Force / Blessed Blend

13.2 Both projects were approved by the Board.

13.3 A third project in partnership with the National Museums was tabled. This project will involve the development of a Titanic based drama project in the Folk and Transport museum to compliment the new Titanic exhibition at Cultra. The Arts Council NI has expressed an interest in the project and a meeting has been planned to agree potential support. The project will see a week long drama summer camp developing the script with mentor Christina Nelson and Dan Gordon creator. The total cost of the project is estimated at £7,000.

13.4 The Board approved to support this project with an estimated cost of £7k.

14. Finance Report

14.1 This paper was noted and approved.

15. Marketing report

15.1 This paper was noted and approved.

16. Update on Business Plan Targets

16.1 This paper was noted and approved.

17. AOB

17.1 Mr Scott thanked Miss Campbell for her service to the Board.

17.2 Mrs Singleton endorsed Mr Scott's words and congratulated Miss Campbell on her professionalism on finance and governance issues during her time at the Agency.

17.3 Mrs Graham thanked Miss Campbell for her leadership and stability and Dr Adamson congratulated her on all her efforts.

17.4 Mrs Reed said that it was a pleasure to have had the opportunity to have worked with Miss Campbell. Meanwhile Mr McLoone gave tribute to Miss Campbell's work at the Agency, the quality of her work, the documentation prepared and how she always maintained a balanced judgement and was never confrontational during her time as the CEO of the Agency.

17.5 Miss Campbell expressed how she enjoyed the challenge and her time working at the Agency.

17.6 Mrs Reed provided the Board with an update on the Monreagh Project. New staff took up post on 4 July 2011. The Monreagh Board members would like to thank the Agency staff for their involvement in the recruitment process.

18. Date and venue of Next

18.1 The date of the next meeting will be moved to September 2011 with a date to be agreed.

Signed:

Dated:

**Tha Board O Ulster-Scotch
109th Board Meeting
29th September 2011, 11.30 a.m.
Ulster-Scots Agency Board Room, Belfast.**

Present:	Mr Tom Scott (Chair)
	Mrs Hilary Singleton
	Mrs Jacqui Reed
	Mr Michael McLoone
	Mrs Angela Graham
	Mr William Leathem
	Mr Tony Crooks
	Dr Ian Adamson
In attendance:	Mr Ian Crozier
	Mr Jim Millar
	Mr Michael McCollough
Recording Minutes:	Claire Harrison

1. Welcome from the Chairperson

1.5 The Chairman welcomed members to the 109th meeting of the Board.

1.6 There was no declaration of interest in any business declared from Members.

2. Apologies

2.1 No apologies were made.

3. Minutes of last Meeting

3.1 Minutes of the meeting of the Board on 8th July were agreed apart from an amendment at 10.3 which was amended.

4.1 Matters Arising

Monreagh funding – agreed that Monreagh needs additional short term support until the appointment of a centre manager. In addition support will be made available to work up a

development plan for the centre identifying strategic objectives and medium/long term vision for the facility.

The Chair met colleagues in DCAL in relation to what will happen in terms of the Board appointments, no clear guidance has been provided by the Secretariat and we await clarification on how the Board will be constituted after 12th December 2011.

The Chair reported that he continues to be involved with the MAGUS and after a short overview of the meeting he advised that he would make MAGUS papers available for any Board member who wished to see them.

Mrs Singleton asked the Chair if there had been any progress in relation to the quality assurance of the language. Chair state it is not yet possible to get an agreed approach, however proposals in the MAGUS re language are to be worked up and will ensure community activist participation. As a result, the Chair confirmed that in relation to the quality assurance issue, realistically we would be looking at the New Year for progress.

Mr Leathem raised the issue of a committee being formed to see over the Commemoration of the centenary events of 2012. Chair stated that Hazel Campbell had attended a few meetings organised by DCAL: in relation to this but no agreed plan had been finalised. Mr Leathem believed we need to ensure the involvement of local community groups. Mrs Singleton agreed with same – it is imperative that Agency tackles the lead and ensure no duplication. Chair agreed and stated we must be sensitive and not supporting a political agenda but Ulster Scots traditions. In addition the Chair Highlighted the need to commence work with those involved in the UK City of Culture celebrations for 2012.

4.2 CEO Report

The CEO tabled and took the Board through his report for the period, which included the following matters:-

- **Ombudsman Complaint**

Mr Crozier updated the Board on the outcome of the Northern Ireland Ombudsman's investigation into the complaint submitted against the Agency by William Drennan. While rejecting most of the complaint, the Ombudsman had upheld Mr Drennan's points in relation

to three specific areas. Mr Crozier explained the remedial actions that had been undertaken within the Agency and tabled a copy of the letter of apology which had been sent to Mr Drennan, following the Ombudsman's guidelines.

- Annual Report & Accounts

It was reported that the 2008 accounts are undergoing final drafting. It is hoped that the 2008 accounts can be signed off at the next North South Language Body meeting in December 2011. The NIAO have now commenced work on the 2009 accounts.

- HR Issues

The CEO reported on a number of HR issues currently affecting the Agency, including the current position on the recruitment of the Director of Corporate Services Post; revision of operational structures; and the operation of the ground floor reception area.

Mr Crozier also updated the Board on a number of HR issues which were presenting challenges within the Grants Unit. In order to ameliorate these, he suggested that incomplete applications received in the forthcoming tuition grants round should be rejected, rather than use staff resources chasing up the missing information. This approach was endorsed by the Board.

4.3 MAGUS presentation

Mr Bill Smith, Chairman of the Ministerial Advisory Group on Ulster Scots, joined the meeting to outline the work of the MAGUS and emphasised the need for the work of the MAGUS to complement the work of the Agency.

5. Report from Audit and Risk Committee

5.1 Mr Crooks confirmed that Goldblatt McGuigan 2010 Audit report will be signed off at the next Audit and Risk Committee meeting in December 2011.

5.2 Mr Crooks stated that the Committee had concerns about the staffing issues especially in the grants section. The Committee were however satisfied with progress being made within the Agency in implementing changes and addressing governance issues.

- 5.3 In relation to Policies, Mr Crooks stated that a number of policies had been tabled which unfortunately the Committee did not have the time to go through. He felt that it would be beneficial if a Board subcommittee was set up simply to review the draft policies as he felt they were a Board matter in the first instance. Policies relevant to the Audit and Risk Committee could be referred as appropriate. The Chair stated that he was happy to participate on a policy working group in conjunction with the executive. Mr Crooks also asked that the thanks of the Board be passed on to Dave McCallum, who had worked very hard to put a wide range of policies together.

6. Update on suspected Fraud Cases

- 6.1 A paper updating the Board on suspected fraud cases was tabled and noted. It was also noted that a paper on the lessons learned from recent closed fraud cases would be tabled at the next Audit and Risk Committee meeting.

7. Community Workers Scheme

- 7.1 Mr Millar presented a progress report on the scheme with a recommendation for future support for 2012.
- 7.2 Mrs Singleton declared her involvement with Mid Armagh Community Network. She indicated for the record that MACN would not be taking up the offer of support under the Community Worker Scheme.
- 7.3 The recommendations in the report were agreed, subject to a change in relation to the East Belfast Titanic Festival, where it was agreed that the groups funding would be extended to the end of March 2012, subject to progress against an action plan agreed with the Agency, which will be reviewed on a quarterly basis.

8. Grants for Approval

Pat and Plain Drama project with the Lyric Theatre

The Board in principle agreed to support the development of year 4 of the Pat and Plain Drama project with the Lyric Theatre which would be on the theme of the Titanic and also involve partnership work

with National Museums. The proposed budget was estimated at this stage at £49,600 with the Agency contributing £29,500.

Minutes of the Antrim Ministers' Meeting 1654–1658 with Dr Mark Sweetman, Trinity College, Dublin

The Board agreed the recommendation to support the publication of the above work up to a maximum of €4,000.

9. Finance report

Mr Crozier stated that a finance meeting will take place next week and revised budgets and forecasts be presented at the next Board meeting. Mr McCullough advised that at present it was projected that the full Agency budget would be spent within the calendar year.

10. Marketing

Mr Leathem spoke about the value of the Ulster-Scot Newspaper. Mr Crozier advised that we need an overall strategy in relation to marketing of the Ulster-Scots as a whole, including the Agency. The possibility of a joint exercise has been raised with MAGUS, who have expressed some interest.

11. Update on Business Plan Targets

This paper was noted and approved.

12. Peripatetic Tutor (Music Awards – Castleblaney, Co Monaghan)

Board members were advised of a forthcoming award ceremony for children from Castleblaney Primary School who had been taught fiddle through the Agency Peripatetic Tutor Programme.

13. AOB

Nil.

14. Date and venue of Next

The date of the next meeting will be 10th November 2011 at Clones, Co.Monaghan.

There is a NS Language Body meeting scheduled for 15th December 2011.

Signed:

Dated:

**Tha Board O Ulster-Scotch
110th Board Meeting
10th November 2011 10.30am
Cassandra Hand Centre, Clones, Co. Monaghan**

Present:	Mr Tom Scott (Chair)
	Mrs Angela Graham (Vice Chair)
	Mrs Jacqui Reed
	Mr Michael McLoone
	Mrs Hilary Singleton
	Mr Tony Crooks
	Dr Ian Adamson
In attendance:	Mr Ian Crozier, CEO
	Mr Jim Millar
	Mr Michael McCollough
Recording Minutes:	Ms Claire Harrison

1. Welcome from the Chairperson

- 1.7 The Chairman welcomed members to the 110th meeting of the Board.
- 1.8 The Chairman provided a brief update on some of his activities since the last Board Meeting; meeting with DCAL; meeting with Ministers and the Chair stated that all were very supportive of the work of the Agency and how Ulster-Scots is being progressed.
- 1.9 There was no declaration of interest in any business declared from Members.

2. Apologies

- 2.1 Mr William Leathem

3. Minutes of last Meeting

- 3.1 Minutes of the meeting of the Board on 29th September 2011 were agreed subject to a number of proofing amendments.

4. Matters Arising

- 4.1 Monreagh – Mr McCloone stated that clarification was needed on this point – it was not clear if the Monreagh issue was to be dealt with by the Board at today’s meeting.

Mr Crozier confirmed that the Agency had agreed to support an interim arrangement for Monreagh in relation to the appointment of a Centre Manager to enable activity and projects to commence.

Chair stated that the matter could be discussed again at the next Board meeting.

4.2 CEO Report

- Board Appointments – Mr Crozier advised that NSMC will be invited to approve the appointment of members for all North/South bodies on 18th November and that our next planned meeting would be the first meeting of the new Board.
- 2012 – Mr Crozier advised that a working group has been established within the Agency consisting of Mr Millar, Mr McCullough and himself. He advised that they had already met with the Community Relations Council in relation to the principles that they have established around commemorations, which DCAL Ministers have suggested all public bodies abide by. The working group previously established by DCAL has been inactive for some time, so partnership projects with them will have to be developed individually and this is ongoing.
- UK City of Culture – A meeting has already taken place with the Minister for Social Development in relation to potential collaboration with the Agency and Derry City Council to maximise the Agency’s involvement in this event and to leave a lasting Ulster-Scots legacy within the City. Work in relation to this is still very much underway and will be an ongoing factor for the Agency within the next few months.
- Monreagh – Mr Crozier advised that a recruitment exercise is currently underway in relation to the Centre Manager post.

- Annual Reports & Accounts – The Agency’s 2008 accounts are now with Foras Na Gaeilge for consolidation. The Agency has been advised by DCAL that the new consolidation process is nearing approval and this will considerably shorten the timescale to have accounts completed.

The 2009 accounts are now also at an advanced stage. To date the Agency has not received any correspondence from the NIAO in relation to the 2008 accounts management letter.

Mr Crooks advised that he was happy with the position.

- HR Issues – Mr Crozier outlined the position in relation to the Director of Corporate Services post and the reason that this post remains vacant. Mr Crozier advised that he had spoken with the department in relation to a possibility of filling the post with an internal member of staff being temporarily promoted for a 12 month period – Mr Crozier informed the Board that the Agency are still awaiting confirmation from the Department on this matter and would advise the Board of any decisions made in the interim.
- Mr Crozier advised that there were still ongoing internal discussions in relation to a Grant Manager post and that he would update the Board fully on this at the next meeting when a paper on the revision to the Development Officer would be tabled.
- The Board were advised that the vacant Grants Officer post had been filled by Siobhan McNally who was previously working on a temporary basis as receptionist for the Agency.
- Mr Crozier advised that the downstairs reception/visitors centre still remains an ongoing issue with the Agency, however ongoing plans and options are being explored and it is hoped that the centre will be up and running again by January 2012.
- MAGUS – Mr Crozier outlined the ongoing work with the MAGUS in particular the BBC archive proposal.

Mrs Singleton raised the issue of the Agency working with the Ulster Scots broadcasting fund in relation to the archive proposal. Mr Crozier advised that unfortunately the broadcasting fund only deal with new material and we are dealing with specifically archived material.

- Core Funded Organisations – Mr Crozier stated that this would be dealt with in a later paper by Mr McCullough.
- Ballykeigle Primary School – Mr Crozier outlined the proposal for Ballykeigle in that the Agency had been approached by parents of the school who had expressed an interest in their school becoming the first Ulster-Scots School in Northern Ireland.

Mr Millar advised that himself and Mr Crozier had had a meeting with the acting Principal of the School to explore options of a collaboration with the Agency and the potential opportunity of a pilot project and the viability of incorporating Ulster-Scots in the delivery of all elements of the primary curriculum, subject to all approvals and a clear statement from the Department of Education and Learning that they will continue provision on the site.

- SEUPB – Mr Crozier advised that work was underway to identify learning and benchmarking opportunities around grant distribution, monitoring and distribution services. A meeting had been held with the Special EU Programmes Body at Executive level and further meetings are in the process of be arranged to enable staff from the Agency and the SEUPB to work alongside each other to broaden opportunities and to move forward with work around a number of key audit priorities.

5. Finance Report

Mr McCullough outlined his report before the Board in particular the position in relation to year end. The Board requested seeing the budget profile and spend to date to gauge the financial position. In addition the Board requested future finance papers clearly identify changes within the budget and significant budget changes are approved by the Board. The finance papers will be presented in this format from January 2012 and Board members will receive training on the finance papers at their induction training.

Mr Crozier advised that Goldblatt McGuigan would be undertaking an assessment of the Agency's budgetary processes during the coming month, with recommendations to follow.

5.1. Grants

Mr McCullough advised the Board that in relation to music and dance tuition letters of offer for this year, the estimated budget was £500,000.00 but this had not included 2010 accruals.

The Chair raised the issue that the Agency still had a substantial level of spend to process by year end and requested an urgent finance meeting with all budget holders to ensure spend is maximised. The finance position should be clearly outlined to the Board at the December meeting and Sponsor Departments informed of any identified under spend as soon as possible.

Mr Crooks asked in relation to grants once we have received an application for a grant do we assess these and then make payment.

Mr Millar advised that the difficulty the Agency has in relation to the grants process is that groups are failing to send through important documentation, the grants section is already under immense pressure and low staffing levels mean that they cannot afford to be spending the majority of their time chasing groups for documentation that they know have to be provided with their applications. Therefore if a group has not provided the relevant documentation at the beginning of the process then it was agreed that in future these applications for grants would be turned down.

Mrs Singleton asked if communication has been forwarded to the groups advising them of deadlines and timelines the Agency is under for submission of their applications for funding.

Mr Millar confirmed that letters, e-mails and calls were made to all the groups.

6. Update on Business Plan Targets

- 6.1 Mr Crozier took the Board through the Business Plan progress report. Progress was noted by the Chair.
- 6.2 Mrs Singleton raised the issue of Education and the meeting organised with Department of Education – she feels that it is essential that the Agency provide stringent preparatory work before such a meeting, preparing an Agency paper outlining the background work by the Agency with CEA, Summer Schools, drama projects etc. Mrs Singleton also suggested that the

Agency should liaise with the Ministerial Advisory Group to have them also provide a paper outlining their remit re education – she feels that this will be beneficial for the Agency as when we attend the meeting we will be attending with a consolidated approach. Mrs Singleton also feels that it would be beneficial for the Agency to see this paper before the meeting with DE.

Mr Millar confirmed that he would prepare this paper on behalf of the Agency.

7. Marketing Report

- 7.1 Mr McCullough took the Board through the marketing update in particular the success the Agency has had this year in a number of areas particularly the Pat & Plain project. The Lyric Theatre had recently won a National Drama cultural diversity award as a result of the Pat and Plain project and the Board congratulated all involved in the project. DCAL are currently considering the Minister highlighting the work of the Agency through this project.
- 7.2 Ulster Orchestra Burns night – the Chair felt that this was a major platform for the Agency and congratulated the work of the staff in developing the project. Board members were advised to notify Mr McCullough if they want tickets for the event.
- 7.3 The Board discussed the importance of the drama activities being visible in the Border Counties and Mr Millar indicated that activity was currently being planned for Castleblaney.

8. Update on Suspected Fraud Cases

- 8.1 Mr Millar took the Board through the paper on suspected Fraud cases. He confirmed that at present there are six cases under consideration where fraud is alleged to have been perpetrated against the Agency. Mr Millar went on to advise that three of the case had been investigated by CIS and reports completed. Of the remaining three, two have been investigated by CIS and one alleged case was discovered in October and this was reported to the Sponsor Departments. Following discussion, members noted the report.

9. Grants/Partnership Project

- 9.1 Ulster Scots Community Network – Mr Crozier stated that he seen a very productive change in the USCN’s business plan for 2012. Mr Crozier recommended to the Board that the sum of £268,925 be awarded to the Community Network for the period of 2012.

The Board agreed in principle to provide funding to the USCN in the sum of £268,925 for 2012, subject to Sponsor Department approval. It was agreed that the full business plan would be circulated to board members so that any concerns could be addressed before a business case was advanced.

- 9.2 Language Organisations – Mr Crozier advised the Board of his concerns around governance and delivery within the Ulster-Scots Language Society and that he had met with the Committee of USLS to discuss this. At this point, he recommended an extension of the current funding contract to the end of March 2012. The Board endorsed this recommendation and asked that the subsequent communication with USLS makes clear that unless sufficient progress is made in relation to these matters, the Agency will not be in a position to offer funding beyond March 2012.

Mr Crozier advised the Board of the need to maximise complementarity in the work of the two language organisations, in the context of proposals for the Agency to establish an Ulster-Scots Language Forum and pursue greater partnership working in 2012. In this context he was recommending an extension of the current funding contract for the Ullans Speakers Association to the end of March 2012 in order to ensure that appropriate changes could be reflected in their business plans.

Chair asked if there was a possibility that issues with Ullans could be completed by December this year and Mr Crozier advised that the three month timescale for this group was to ensure that we allowed sufficient time for Sponsor Department approval, rather than placing unnecessary pressure on the group. He was hopeful that these matters would be addressed sooner. The Board agreed the recommendation.

10. AOB

10.1 Mr Adamson advised that he would be stepping down from the Board and thanked both his fellow Board members and the Agency staff for their hard work over the years.

10.2 Ms Graham advised that she would be stepping down from the Board and also thanked her fellow Board members and Agency staff for their work and commitment over the years.

11. Date of Next Meeting

11.1 As there was still uncertainty over the new Board and the next meeting was scheduled past the end date of the current Board, the Board agreed to reschedule its December meeting to 6th December to allow members to address several outstanding issues.

Signed:

Dated: