



Ulster-Scots Agency
Boord o Ulstèr-Scotch

Board Decisions 2020

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**Tha Boord o Ulster-Scotch
179th Board Meeting
13th February 2020
Ulster-Scots Agency**

Present:	Mr Keith Gamble (Chairman)
	Ms. Julie Andrews
	Mr. David McNarry
	Mr. Iain Carlisle
In Attendance:	Mr. Ian Crozier, Chief Executive
	Mr. Richard Hanna, Director of Education & Language
	Mr. David McCallum, Director of Corporate Services
	Ms. Gillian McMaster, Director of Development
Apologies:	N/A
Recording Secretary:	Ms Lorna Elliott (HR/Office Manager)

6. Progress Report Against Draft Business Plan Outturn 2019

The progress report was presented by Mr Crozier and discussed. The Board noted the contents of the report.

7. Finance Report

Finance Paper

The report was presented by Mr McCallum and noted by the Board.

Mr McCallum also advised that the latest updated indicated 2017 Accounts should be laid by April 2020. It is also hoped that the 2018 accounts may also be laid at the same time as the 2017 as they are currently with Foras for translation.

Budget Vs Actual Outturn 2019

Mr McCallum explained the budget variances. Mr McCallum confirmed that the underspend in Servicing the Community was due to groups not claiming the full amount of their award due to changed circumstances, such as lower actual costs or securing additional funding elsewhere. In response to a questions from the Board, Mr McCallum confirmed that the underspend was not due to the Agency withholding funds in respect of claims.

Mr McCallum explained that the Education underspend was due to an ongoing project with CCEA.

The Board discussed the potential to have paperless board meetings and asked Mr McCallum to investigate the feasibility of this.

Action: Mr McCallum

Statutory Obligations Report

The report was noted by the Board.

Prompt Payments

The report was noted by the Board.

HR Report

The report was noted by the Board.

Audit and Risk Committee

Ms Andrews, Chair of the ARC, reported on the annual report and satisfactory rating which had been received in respect of the work of the committee. The Board noted the report and congratulated all those involved for their ongoing work in this area.

8. New Decade New Approach

Mr Crozier spoke to the report, which was discussed by the Board. The Board was content with the Chief Executive's proposed approach, which was to seek clarity around the situation where possible and work with a range of stakeholders to promote the interests of Ulster-Scots within the developing situation.

9. Risk Register

Mr McCallum presented the report, which was noted by the Board.

Mr Crozier and Mr McCallum reported on a recent discussion with Sponsor Departments in relation to Brexit related risks on the Register. After a discussion, the Board agreed that it was content for the Brexit risks to be removed from the Register, subject to consultation with the ARC.

10. CEO Report

Mr Crozier presented the paper to the Board.

Mr Crozier advised that it is currently anticipated that the full Board will be in place no later than April 2020, but this is subject to ongoing discussions for form a new Irish government.

Mr Crozier updated the Board on developments in respect of the Presidential Cottages project with Mid and East Antrim Council. The Agency has been forced to surrender £50k in respect of the Arthur Cottage, Cullybackey, due to uncertainty created by the decision of the Council to enter into discussions with a private sector operator over the future ownership/management of the facility. Once the situation has been resolved to our satisfaction we will seek to re-establish the project for Cullybackey. In the meantime, work is progressing in respect of the element of the project in connection with the Andrew Jackson Cottage, Boneybefore, Carrickfergus, which is worth a further £50k.

Mr Crozier advised that the Agency had also received £30,000 in capital for IT which meant a full IT upgrade in terms of PCs, servers and software.

Mr Gamble commented on the success of Language Week, including the events programme and the range of materials that had been produced to support it, including the online When o Wurds Quiz. In response to a question, Ms McMaster confirmed that the promotional pens were now on re-order due to their popularity. Mr Hanna confirmed that the number of people taking the test had now passed 32,000.

Mr Crozier reported on the recent Burns Week activities, which included a range of community showcase activities, as well as higher profile events like the Big Burns Day in Belfast City Hall, which involved the Lord Mayor, High Sheriff and DfC Minister. He advised that the executive proposes to review both Language Week and Burns Week in the first half of 2020 to start preparation for 2021.

11. Business Plan 2020

The Board discussed and agreed the draft Business Plan for 2020.

Mr Crozier reported that the draft Corporate Plan was currently being finalised.

12. AOB

Mr McCallum tabled a brief paper identifying a request for funding which had been received from Bready and District Ulster-Scots Development Association in respect of the forthcoming European Highland Dance Championships in Londonderry. It was proposed that a full paper would be issued in due course, but would have to come to the Board in light of current board numbers, as the Grants Committee was not currently operating.

**Tha Boord o Ulster-Scotch
180th Board Meeting
12th March 2020
Ulster-Scots Agency**

Present:	Mr Keith Gamble (Chairman)
	Ms. Julie Andrews
	Mr. David McNarry
	Mr. Iain Carlisle
In Attendance:	Mr. Ian Crozier, Chief Executive
	Mr. Richard Hanna, Director of Education & Language
	Mr. David McCallum, Director of Corporate Services
	Ms. Gillian McMaster, Director of Development
Apologies:	N/A
Recording Secretary:	Ms. Rachel Shannon (PA to CEO)

5. Matters Arising

All matters arising were dealt with elsewhere on the agenda.

6. Progress Report Against Draft Business Plan

The Board noted the contents of the report.

7. Finance Report

Finance Paper

The report was presented by Mr. McCallum and noted by the Board.

Mr. McCallum explained that we are 17k overbudgeted at this time and advised that the Letter of Offer for the new IT refresh has been received and will be processed in due course.

Mr. McCallum has advised there were issues surrounding the Coronavirus where schools are being closed along with the cancelling of tuitions. It was outlined that if the office has to close due to the situation then at least 4 members of staff will immediately be able to work at home using the disaster recovery model. Further discussions are to be had as the situation evolves.

Budget Vs Actual Outturn 2019

Mr. McCallum presented the report to the Board and it was noted by the Board.

Statutory Obligations Report

The report was noted by the Board.

Prompt Payments

The report was noted by the Board.

Gifts and Hospitality

The report was noted by the Board.

HR Report

The report was noted by the Board.

Review of Corporate Plan 2019 Draft

Mr. McCallum advised the report was a roundup of last years Corporate/Business plan. The Board noted the contents of the report subject to a few minor amendments.

8. Education Report

Mr. Hanna reported to the Board of his recent trip to Savannah, Atlanta and Georgia, USA. The purpose of the visit was to launch the Ulster-Scots Agency video 'From Ulster to Savannah' which was a record of the appearance in the St Patrick's Day Prade in Savannah Georgia of the Omagh Protestant Boys Melody Flute Band in 2019.

Curated screenings took place in Savannah and Atlanta. The Events were organised in partnership with the British and Irish Consuls General in Atlanta, Georgia Southern University (Savannah) and The Northern Ireland Bureau.

The Savannah event was opened by the Mayor of Savannah and guests at both events included representatives of the St Patrick's Day Committee and St Andrew's and Burns Societies. Approximately 100 guests attended each of the events.

Each event featured a display of the 10 panel exhibition about Ulster-Scots in Savannah. This exhibition was produced for the band's visit in 2019 and features Ulster-Scots links with Georgia. It has remained with Georgia Southern University and continues to be used at Ulster-Scots events in Georgia.

A date has been secured for a launch of 'From Ulster to Savannah' in Belfast in Parliament Buildings (12th March).

The Board noted the contents of the report.

9. Development & Marketing Report

Ms. McMaster presented the report and advised that it was made up of a summary of meetings that had recently taken place

Ms. McMaster advised that NI Human Rights Commission would like a formal indication from the Agency as to our support of the agreement to designate Ulster-Scots under the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. It was agreed that the Agency would continue to liaise with NIHRC and bring some more detailed advice to the Board.

10. CEO Report

Mr. Crozier presented the paper to the Board.

The Board noted the contents of the report and agreed to establish a working group to consider proposals to mark the Centenary of Northern Ireland in 2021. Mr Gamble, Mr Carlisle, Ms Andrews and Mr McNarry volunteered to participate in the group and also suggested that Allen McAdam be approached.

Action: Mr Crozier

11. Grants for Consideration

The Board approved the recommendations for support for the European Highland Dance Championships and FUSEfm Mourne, however it was noted that these may be impacted by the emerging COVID-19 situation.

12. Policy Revisions

No changes were noted by the Board.

13. AOB

No AOB noted.

14. Date of Next Board Meeting

Board members were reminded that the next meeting will take place at 1.00pm on 23rd April 2020 at the Corn Exchange.

Signed:.....

Dated:.....

**Tha Boord o Ulster-Scotch
181st Board Meeting
23rd April 2020
Ulster-Scots Agency**

Present:	Mr Keith Gamble (Chairman)
	Ms. Julie Andrews
	Mr. Iain Carlisle
	Mr. Ian Crozier, Chief Executive
In Attendance:	Mr. Richard Hanna, Director of Education & Language
	Mr. David McCallum, Director of Corporate Services
	Ms. Gillian McMaster, Director of Development
Apologies:	Mr. David McNarry
Recording Secretary:	Ms Lorna Elliott (HR/Office Manager)

5. Matters Arising

All matters arising were dealt with elsewhere on the agenda.

6. COVID-19 Update

Mr Crozier presented a detailed report to the Board which set out the impact of COVID-19 on various parts of the Agency's work. During the discussion that followed, several members expressed the view that the Agency was performing well in difficult circumstances.

Members discussed in particular the situation in respect of virtual tuition and asked the executive to ensure that monitoring was taking place in order to ensure that the provision was value for money for both the Agency and participants.

The report was noted by the Board.

7. Progress Report

The Report was presented to the Board by Mr Crozier and noted by the Board.

8. Finance and Corporate Services

Finance Paper

The report was presented by Mr McCallum and noted by the Board.

Mr McCallum advised that the 2020 Audit Schedule has been agreed. Mr McCallum also advise that the 2017 Accounts are to be laid 24th April 2020 and 2018 should be laid in the next few weeks.

Mr McCallum advised that the 2019 Internal Audit was underway electronically.

Budget Vs Actual Outturn 2019

Mr McCallum explained the budget variances and had hoped to be able to have a better picture upon April's Month End.

The Board discussed the risk of underspend as a result of the current situation and agreed that once the impact of Covid-19 had been addressed, any available resources should be directed towards preparation for the Centenary of Northern Ireland, as it may be difficult to secure additional resources going forward.

Statutory Obligations Report

The report was noted by the Board.

Prompt Payments

The report was noted by the Board.

HR Report

The report was noted by the Board.

Risk Register

The report was noted by the Board.

9. CEO Report

The Board noted the CEO Report as presented by Mr Crozier.

Mr Crozier advised that the Agency was still working on the Agency's accommodations issues but progress was slow due to current COVID-19 situation.

10. AOB

Nothing to report.

11. Date of Next Board Meeting

Board members were reminded that the next meeting will take place at 1.00pm on 28th May 2020 and via Zoom.

Signed:

Dated:

**Tha Boord o Ulster-Scotch
182nd Board Meeting
28th May 2020
Ulster-Scots Agency
1PM via Zoom**

Present:	Mr Keith Gamble (Chairman)
	Ms. Julie Andrews
	Mr. Iain Carlisle
	Mr. Ian Crozier, Chief Executive
In Attendance:	Mr. Richard Hanna, Director of Education & Language
	Mr. David McCallum, Director of Corporate Services
	Ms. Gillian McMaster, Director of Development
Apologies:	Mr. David McNarry
Recording Secretary:	Ms Lorna Elliott (HR/Office Manager)

4. Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of 23rd April 2020 were noted and approved by the Board.

5. Matters Arising

Mr Crozier updated the Board in relation to the quality of tuition being delivered by Agency funded projects using various digital platforms, which members had expressed some concern about at the April meeting.

Feedback was shared which had been recieved from tutors and parents, which was extremely positive and Mr Crozier reported that this was also reflected in the observation of Agency staff who had been remotely monitoring the tuition.

Board commented positively on the progress and agreed that the Agency should seek to capture as much positive feedback as possible and seek to capitalise on it going forward.

6. COVID-19 – Additional Funding Support

Mr Carlisle and Mr Crozier declared an interest in the matter.

Mr McCallum presented a detailed report to the Board which set out the financial impact of COVID-19 on various groups within the Ulster-Scots sector and sought the approval of the Board to uplift community M&D grants (including Mid Armagh Community Network) to up to 90% of eligible cost, which was the maximum allowed under the Agency's Financial Assistance Scheme.

The paper also proposed adjusting the grant awards for all Community Impact Programme grants to 90%, which involved no additional cost to the Agency, but meant that the target that each group had to raise match funding was reduced, reflecting the much more challenging funding environment. The Agency would review project plans accordingly.

The Board approved the recommendations set out in the report.

7. Progress Report

Mr Crozier spoke to the Progress Report, which was noted by the Board.

8. Finance and Corporate Services

Finance Paper

The report was presented by Mr McCallum and noted by the Board.

Mr McCallum advised that the 2017 Accounts were laid 24th April 2020 and 2018 should be laid in June/July 2020.

Mr McCallum advised that the 2019 External Audit has been taken as far as it can electronically and will require a week of substantive testing to be completed once we can return to the office.

Budget Vs Actual Outturn 2019

Mr McCallum explained the budget variances and advised the Board that the Agency was working on re-profiling of budgets.

The Board discussed the risk of underspend as a result of the current situation. Mr Crozier advised that the Agency was continuing to work towards full utilisation of our planned budget, but expressed concern as to the likely availability of additional resources going forward. He hoped that we would be in a position to look at reallocations from next month.

The Board reiterated that once the impact of Covid-19 had been addressed, any available resources should be directed towards preparation for the Centenary of Northern Ireland, as it may be difficult to secure additional resources going forward.

Statutory Obligations Report

The report was noted by the Board.

Prompt Payments

The report was noted by the Board.

HR Report

The report was noted by the Board.

Risk Register

The report was noted by the Board.

9. CEO Report

Mr Crozier advised that it is likely that the new Irish government may be formed in June and officials consider that NSMC sectorals are likely to start in September 2020.

Mr Crozier advised that the Agency has been working on plans to return to the office, but current guidance states that cultural organisations are not likely to be returned before August and even with that the guidance advises that everyone that can work from home should continue to do so. Mr Crozier confirmed that the Agency has space to comply with social distancing. Mr Crozier also spoke to the Appendix to the paper which set out the Agency's proposed approach to supporting the recovery of the Discover Ulster-Scots Centre following

lockdown and advised that this was with USCN for comment. The Board was supportive of the proposed approach.

Mr Crozier updated the Board in relation to the Agency's ongoing work around New Decade New Approach and advised that we would be approaching the Northern Ireland Office directly to establish key contacts in relation to the UK Government commitments in the document.

The Board noted the contents of the report.

10. AOB

No items of other business were raised.

11. Date of Next Board Meeting

Board members were reminded that the next meeting will take place at 1.00pm on 25th June 2020 and via Zoom.

Signed:

Dated:

**Tha Boord o Ulster-Scotch
183rd Board Meeting
25th June 2020
Ulster-Scots Agency
1PM via Zoom**

Present:	Mr Keith Gamble (Chairman)
	Ms. Julie Andrews
	Mr. Iain Carlisle
	Mr. Ian Crozier, Chief Executive
In Attendance:	Mr. Richard Hanna, Director of Education & Language
	Mr. David McCallum, Director of Corporate Services
	Ms. Gillian McMaster, Director of Development
Apologies:	Mr. David McNarry
Recording Secretary:	Ms Lorna Elliott (HR/Office Manager)

3. Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

4. Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of 28th May 2020 were noted and approved by the Board.

5. Matters Arising

Any matters arising were covered elsewhere on the agenda.

6. New Decade New Approach and Human Rights

Mr Crozier spoke to the paper on NDNA and Human Rights. After a discussion, the Board agreed: a) to endorse the content of Appendix A regarding the relationship between Ulster-Scots and Ulster-British as set out in the NDNA; b) that the Agency in seeking to address its

concerns, should aim to suggest operational solutions rather than legislative ones; c) to note the other contents of the report including the proposal to establish communications with the Northern Ireland Office.

7. Progress Report

Mr Crozier spoke to the Progress Report, which was noted by the Board.

8. Finance and Corporate Services

8.0 Finance Paper

The report was presented by Mr McCallum and noted by the Board.

Budget Vs Actual Outturn 2020

Mr McCallum explained the budget variances and advised the Board that the Agency was working on re-profiling of budgets.

The Board agreed to wait for further guidance from the government in terms of socially distancing/gatherings, incase there is potential to fund small events and/or small festivals towards end of the summer.

Gifts & Hospitality

The report was noted by the Board.

Statutory Obligations Report

The report was noted by the Board.

Prompt Payments

The report was noted by the Board.

HR Report

The report was noted by the Board.

8.1 Policy Updates noted by the Board:

- Travel and Subsistence
- Business Recovery and Continuity

8.2 Audit Committee Update

Ms Andrews reported to the Board following the Agency’s Audit and Risk Committee Meeting held on 18th June 2020. It was reported that a member of the ARC had suggested changing the format of the Updates section on the Risk Register. The matter was discussed at the ARC and neither NIAO or IA had any issue with the current format, but the matter was referred to the Agency Board for consideration. After a brief discussion the Board agreed to retain the current format.

9. CEO Report

Mr Crozier spoke to his report, which was noted by the Board.

10. AOB

Mr McCallum advised that the NICS payscale Awards for the 2019-2020 had been issued by the Sponsor Departments on 25th June 2020 and the Agency could implement same with the permission of the Board.

The Board agreed in principle but would confirm once paperwork was reviewed by email.

11. Date of Next Board Meeting

Board members suggested a July meeting via zoom to be held on 30th July 2020.

Signed:

Dated:

**Tha Boord o Ulster-Scotch
184th Board Meeting
30th July 2020
Ulster-Scots Agency
1PM via Zoom**

Present:	Mr Keith Gamble (Chairman)
	Ms. Julie Andrews
	Mr. Iain Carlisle
	Mr. Ian Crozier, Chief Executive
In Attendance:	Mr. Richard Hanna, Director of Education & Language
	Mr. David McCallum, Director of Corporate Services
	Ms. Gillian McMaster, Director of Development
Apologies:	Mr. David McNarry
Recording Secretary:	Ms Lorna Elliott (HR/Office Manager)

4. Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of 25th June 2020 were noted and approved by the Board.

5. Matters Arising

No Matters arising noted by the Board.

6. Northern Ireland Office Update - NDNA

Ms McMaster presented a report to the Board which advised that the Agency had attended a meeting with Northern Ireland Office representative Paul Flynn, Deputy Director with responsibility for Political Affairs and oversight of the implementation of the Agreement.

The Agency raised a range of issues which the NIO acknowledged and agreed to facilitate further contact between the Agency, NIO and other Departments as necessary.

The NIO also indicated that some other work areas, which might have been assumed to be led by NIO given that they are in the UK Government Annex to NDNA, are in fact the responsibility of NI Executive.

Centenary of Northern Ireland

Officials within the External Affairs section in NIO are currently considering how best to engage with a broad range of stakeholders to ensure that the occasion is marked in a sensitive manner which guarantees cross community buy-in. The NIO has allocated a budget in the region of £3-4 million to mark the Centenary and will look to utilise a mixed delivery model whereby they may host some events but for others will act as the facilitator.

The Secretary of State is keen that the Centenary is acknowledged as a significant point in the history of the UK and not just NI. Officials are to consider what role if any the Prime Minister will play in relation to marking the Centenary and some interest was expressed in the Agency's idea of commemorating Andrew Bonar Law in that context.

The NIO has undertaken to explore what support, if any, they can provide in order to facilitate the Agency using the Coat of Arms of the former NI Parliament to explain the significance of the Ulster-Scots story to the formation of NI.

A commitment was given that the Agency would be included on a list of stakeholders to be consulted in relation to proposals for marking the Centenary.

Culture & Community Fund

No work has been taken forward in relation to this area as yet. At present the terms of reference, purpose of the fund, criteria etc. have not been agreed. Although listed as a commitment of the UK Government it is a matter for the NI Executive to determine how this fund will operate.

As yet there is no clarity in relation to whether the Irish Language Commissioner and the Commissioner with responsibility for Ulster-Scots will have their own funding streams or whether these funds will be managed by the Office of Culture and Identity. This will need to be detailed in legislation taken forward by the NI Assembly.

Connected Classrooms

Although there have been some initial conversations between the British Council and the Department of Education this work stalled as a result of the current COVID crisis. Given the challenges facing schools currently it is expected this work will be delayed further.

NI Homecoming

The External Affairs team within NIO will support the NI Executive in taking this measure forward. However, it is for the NI Executive to shape and design this intervention. It is likely that the legislation establishing the Office of Culture and Identity will help shape this programme.

No decisions have been taken as yet in relation to whether or not it should be a one-off event, a series of events throughout the year similar to Ireland's The Gathering in 2013 or themed years such as Scotland's year of Coasts and Waters. It is not explicitly linked to the Centenary of Northern Ireland.

NIO are considering how best they can support this measure e.g. through funding, identifying key stakeholders or opening doors internationally.

Closer Collaboration between tourism, sport and culture across the UK

The NIO is currently considering whether there is more which can be done at a UK Government level to support the NI Executive bringing large scale sporting events to NI e.g. World Rally Championship or a joint UK & Ireland World Cup bid. Initial discussions have taken place between UK Sport and the Department for Communities. The Agency raised the need for support for East-West work similar to the Colmcille initiative. NIO were supportive of the concept, but didn't immediately see a role for themselves in it.

International Trade

The NIO recognises the significance of cultural connections and the potential to exploit them in order to further trade ambitions, especially post Brexit.

The NIO is keen to support the establishment of a Department for International Trade presence in NI and encourage more decision makers from across Government to recognise the wealth of cultural diversity across the UK and how it can be leveraged internationally. They have agreed to put the Agency in touch with DIT.

NI Hub in London

It is a matter for the NI Executive to scope the establishment of a NI Hub in London. The NIO will offer support but will not take the lead on this initiative.

The Board Noted the report.

Mr Crozier advised that the Agency had also reached out to DCHG to ask if they wanted the Agency to liaise with them or the DFA directly – DCHG confirmed they are content for the Agency to engage directly with DFA unless the Agency believes there are cultural issues and then to make DCHG aware of same.

7. Progress Report

Mr Crozier spoke to the Progress Report, which was noted by the Board.

Mr Gamble expressed concerns on focusing on online output moving forward. It was agreed by the Board that online medias should be used in conjunction with face to face interactions/groups and not replacements on a permanent basis.

8. Finance and Corporate Services

8.0 Finance Paper

The report was presented by Mr McCallum and noted by the Board.

Internal Audit & Annual Accounts

Audits to be carried out in 2020 –

- Finance
- Grants Management and Government Funding Database
- IT Security, Business Continuity & Disaster Recovery,
- GDPR

The Audits already carried out this year have all received Satisfactory Rating and any recommendations have now been implemented.

- Complaints, Gifts & Hospitality
- Drawdowns Procedure
- Safeguarding

Annual Accounts

2018 Accounts - were certified in 2019 and forwarded to Sponsor Departments and then to be presented to respective Governments. Sponsor Departments to follow up on same.

2019 Accounts – the audit commenced 30th March 2020 and draft accounts submitted to the departments 24th March 2020. The Audit is still ongoing but in order to complete same will require a substantive week of testing in the office due to commence August 2020.

Annual Budget

The Agency carried out the necessary re-profiling of the Budget during July 2020 to the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic.

Gifts & Hospitality

The report was noted by the Board.

Statutory Obligations Report

The report was noted by the Board.

Prompt Payments

The report was noted by the Board.

HR Report

The report was noted by the Board.

9. CEO Report

Mr Crozier presented his report, which was noted by the Board.

National Records Scotland / Scotland's People

A positive discussion has taken place with NRS to explore the potential for greater East-West collaboration, in particular for Ulster-Scots to make greater use of the Scotland's People website and resources.

It is not possible for the Discover Ulster-Scots Centre to become a Scotland's People centre for legal reasons, however NRS are keen to find ways for us to make greater use of the site and have agreed to make free credits available for staff in the Centre to introduce visitors to the resource and for NRS staff to train our team how to use the site.

We have agreed to keep in touch with NRS and plan to visit their headquarters in Edinburgh when public health arrangements permit.

Ulster-Scots Strategy

Development of the new Ulster-Scots Strategy is behind schedule due to staff turnover within DfC, however the Agency is continuing to engage with officials to support the work. We have recently provided the Department with a document highlighting areas where amendment is required and are awaiting feedback. We will continue to work on our preparations.

FCNM

We have reviewed the Cornwall Council document supplied by NIHRC in the context of Framework Convention recognition and are now working to develop a document which sets out a series of cultural markers associated with being an Ulster-Scot. These

will be based on existing work (as far as possible), framed in a way that addresses our history as well as our contemporary experience, eg explaining the current language situation alongside the historic one; and provides the opportunity for the widest possible group of people to opt in. It is anticipated that the areas covered will include:

- Scottish Origin
- Language/Literature
- Religion
- Philosophy and Political Outlook
- Festivals
- Music
- Dance
- Sport
- Food

Mr Gamble suggested that in light of the significance of the Ulster Banner to the Ulster-Scots community and the extent to which we proposed to rely on it and the Arms of the NI Parliament from which it is derived in the marking of the NI Centenary, that it should be included on the list of cultural markers. This was unanimously agreed.

10. Draft Corporate Plan 2020-2022

Mr Crozier spoke on the updated draft Corporate Plan for 2020-22, which had been circulated to the Board for approval. Following discussion the Board approved the document.

11. AOB

Arms Length Body Meeting

Mr Gamble advised the Board that he had attended a Zoom meeting of all the Arms Length Bodies of DfC. Mr Gamble advised that the meeting summarised that all ALBs are seeking more funding and that the DfC Minister plans to have a meeting with each individual ALB.

Future Meetings

The Board discussed the format of future meetings and agreed that while members would like to see face to face meetings resume, that they felt that this would not be appropriate until Agency staff were back working in the office. The Chief Executive advised that this could only happen when Sponsor Departments were content with such an approach and that the situation would be kept under review.

Mr Gamble praised the Agency on their swift response to the initial lock down and how quickly the Agency worked to finding solutions of possible impacts of the pandemic etc online tuition etc . Mr Gamble felt that the Agency was one of the first organisations to take such approach so early on during the pandemic and believes it had resulted in positive feedback within the communities which has resulted in groups requesting to hold meetings with the Agency in terms of potential collaborations on more projects in the future.

12. Date of Next Board Meeting

Members agreed to hold a meeting in September on date to be confirmed.

Signed:

Dated:

**Tha Boord o Ulster-Scotch
185th Board Meeting
24th September 2020
Ulster-Scots Agency
1PM via Zoom**

Present:	Mr Keith Gamble (Chairman)
	Ms. Julie Andrews
	Mr. Iain Carlisle
	Mr. Ian Crozier, Chief Executive
In Attendance:	Mr. Richard Hanna, Director of Education & Language
	Mr. David McCallum, Director of Corporate Services
	Ms. Gillian McMaster, Director of Development
Apologies:	Mr. David McNarry
Recording Secretary:	Ms Lorna Elliott (HR/Office Manager)

4. Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of 30th July 2020 were noted and approved by the Board.

5. Matters Arising

Mr Crozier presented an update on Music and Dance Grants – Currently 116 live grants 14 have completed during the pandemic via online virtual tuition. 67 have advised they are planning to resume activity either online or in groups. 7 have advised that they cannot resume as yet and 27 have not yet advised of their position.

The general outcome looks is showing very few groups are not going to go back and most plan to return when possible

This updated was noted by the Board.

7. Progress Report

Mr Crozier spoke to the Progress Report, which was noted by the Board.

Mr Crozier confirmed that any targets which may not be met in the current plans are due to factors outside of the Agency's control during this pandemic. However Mr Crozier advised that the Agency was making work arounds or downscaling some projects/programmes in order to attempt to meet as many targets as possible.

Mr Crozier advised the Agency was approached by the department requesting if the Agency was seeking to make changes to the current Business Plan. Mr Crozier advised that it was the Agency's was adopting the approach that the Business Plan would remain unchanged and any variances would be justifiable due to being outside of the Agency's control. The Board agreed with this strategy.

8. Finance and Corporate Services

8.0 Finance Paper

The report was presented by Mr McCallum and noted by the Board.

Annual Accounts

2019 Accounts – The Audit is still ongoing but in order to complete same will require a substantive week of testing in the office due to commence August 2020.

It is unlikely that North/South bodies will be certified until at least October, as they are waiting on figure coming from the Pension actuary for pension disclosure related to the McCloud Judgement.

Annual Budget

The Agency carried out the necessary re-profiling of the Budget during September 2020 to the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic.

Gifts & Hospitality

The report was noted by the Board.

Statutory Obligations Report

The report was noted by the Board.

Prompt Payments

The report was noted by the Board.

HR Report

The report was noted by the Board.

Policy Revisions

The Policy revisions listed were noted by the Board:

- Fire & Safety Evacuation Policy
- Health & Safety Evacuation Policy ROI
- Health & Safety Evacuation Policy NI
- Staff Induction Policy
- Van Policy
- Procurement Policy
- USA Budget Process
- Purchase Ledger
- Disposal Changes

Ms Andrews updated the Board following the Audit & Risk Committee meeting held 17th September 2020 to advise that the Agency has written to the Department to request a meeting to discuss the Departmental Security Health check for 2019 – 2020. This has been the first time that the Agency has been asked to undertake such an audit which appears to be relevant to Department of Communities and ALBS of that department as no other N/S Bodies have been asked to complete such a health check. The health check is fairly extensive and burdensome on the Agency both financially and in terms of the scope of the work involved as the audit would cost circa £10,000 over a third of the Agency's audit budget. The audit would also be duplicating some of the Agency's own robust auditing processes. Therefore the Agency is questioning the need of this health check with the department in the hope of finding mutual agreement that the checklist is no required to be completed by the Agency.

9. CEO Report

Mr Crozier presented his report, which was noted by the Board.

Board Members

Mr Crozier advised that there was still no movement on Southern Board members but understood the North South Ministerial Council had meetings lined up and had hoped the Agency would have Southern Members by the Autumn.

Business Plans / Corporate Plan

Outstanding Business and Corporate Plans are with Sponsor Departments awaiting approval at a future NSMC meeting. No date has yet been confirmed.

Covid-19 Additional Resources

Mr Crozier advised that the UK Government allocated Northern Ireland £33m under the Barnett consequential for supporting Arts, Heritage and Culture. The Department for Communities is currently submitting a bid to manage these funds and at the direction of the Minister a specific stream is to be developed for Language and Culture projects across Ulster-Scots, Irish and Sign Language.

Potential Language Body Budget Increase

Mr Crozier advised that the Department recently advised the Agency that the Minister wishes to work with NSMC and DCHG to agree an uplift in the baseline budget of the Language Body and asked the Agency to submit proposals in respect of this.

The Agency understands, most of the focus of the discussion will be on revenue funding and in that regard have prepared a series of proposals that would see an increase of around £1.1million annually. The proposals focus on measures that will create additional capacity within the Ulster-Scots Agency and help the organisations to move up a gear in the context of the changing operating environment; increase the capacity of the Ulster-Scots Community Network as our primary means of providing developmental support to the Ulster-Scots community; increase the size of the Ulster-Scots sector by bringing significant cultural and community organisations within the scope of our core funding; and continue the growth of our successful Community Impact Programme, which supports the development of Ulster-Scots at grassroots community level.

The Agency intends to increase capacity and has requested funding for additional 14 staff members including a brand new directorate along with consequential upgrades of some current positions. Additional funding for corefunded groups and uplift to the community impact have also been requested and with more staff and people involved this should generate more ideas which in turn leads to greater programmes and outputs within the community.

Mr Crozier reported that In terms of capital, the Agency have made specific proposals for year one to support the purchase of a mobile exhibition unit; support an interpretive project at the Chester A. Arthur cottage in Cullybackey; and support a small capital grants programme to mark the Centenary of Northern Ireland. The Agency has also sought capital resources contingent on the revenue proposals to

equip the new staff that we have proposed. We have also included a marker for £2million in respect of capital costs associated with the potential refit costs of the Ulster-Scots Hub.

Mr Carlisle reminded that if the Agency was successful in this bid then the staff and people would need to be seen on the ground and amongst the community and have a bigger output.

Ms Andrews highlighted potential risks in how the Agency may look requesting mainly upgrades and new additional staff rather than a bid for promotion of Ulster-Scots projects.

The Board noted the report.

10. AOB

Nothing to report.

10. Date of Next Board Meeting

Members agreed next meeting 29th October 2020 at 1.00pm.

Signed:

Dated:

**Tha Boord o Ulster-Scotch
186th Board Meeting
26th November 2020
Ulster-Scots Agency
1PM via Zoom**

Present:	Mr Keith Gamble (Chairman)
	Ms. Julie Andrews
	Mr. Iain Carlisle
In Attendance:	Mr. Ian Crozier, Chief Executive
	Mr. Richard Hanna, Director of Education & Language
	Mr. David McCallum, Director of Corporate Services
	Ms. Gillian McMaster, Director of Development
Apologies:	Mr. David McNarry
Recording Secretary:	Ms Lorna Elliott (HR/Office Manager)

4. Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of 24th September 2020 were noted and approved by the Board.

5. Matters Arising

All matters arising were dealt with elsewhere on the agenda.

6. Progress Report

Mr Crozier delivered the detail on the Progress Report, which was noted by the Board.

7. Updates

Mr Crozier presented the three reports to the board for information prior to them being submitted to NSMC.

- Covid – 19 update
- Brexit Update
- NSMC Update – Update of Ulster-Scots Key Achievement 2017-2020.

All reports were noted by the Board.

Mr Carlisle noted that there are likely to be no policy changes for the Agency following Brexit and noted that a lot of work has still been achieved throughout the pandemic in 2020.

8. Finance Paper

The report was presented by Mr McCallum and noted by the Board.

Annual Accounts

2018 Accounts – should be laid in coming weeks

2019 Audit – Still on-going and there has been a change of lead auditor but hopeful for completion and signing by end of the 2020. The delay has been outside of the Agency's control.

Annual Budget

The Agency carried out the necessary re-profiling of the Budget the last quarter of 2020 and there has been variances due to Covid-19 pandemic. Underspends will be reallocated to fund other projects.

Mr Crozier advised that the Agency had outline plans in place should they be required for those group who had already received funding but had not completed all of their tuitions. It is envisaged that most if not all of any upfront payments will be carried over to the next claim year, rather than clawing back funds, which would be administratively challenging and potentially damaging from a communications perspective.

Mr McCallum advised that the Agency may need to procure software to allow staff to sign documents electronically moving forward as an alternative to the system currently in place.

Gifts & Hospitality

The report was noted by the Board.

Statutory Obligations Report

The report was noted by the Board.

Prompt Payments

The report was noted by the Board.

HR Report

The report was noted by the Board.

9. Education Report

Mr Hanna reported on progress in relation to a number of Agency-led projects:

- Ulster-Scots Food Videos
- Wheen O Wurds
- Ulster-Scots Remembrance Video
- Get to Grips – Music Tuition
- Ulster-Scots Language Videos
- Land of Promise – School Production
- Recipe Book

Mr Hanna also reported that the Agency had been working with a range of partners to deliver a series of projects which had attracted significant funding from the Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund:

- Ulster-Scots Walking Tours
- Ulster-Scots music traditions – Lambeg Drum and fife
- Ulster-Scots Language games for primary schools
- Ulster-Scots Virtual Visits
- Making Northern Ireland

The Education Report was noted by the Board.

11. CEO Report

Mr Crozier presented the CEO report to the Board.

Board Members

It had been hoped that our four southern board vacancies would be filled at the forthcoming NSMC Language Sectoral, which is scheduled for 27th November. However, as late as 25th November, no nominations had been finalised by the southern department and there is now some doubt as to whether nominations will be made on that date. The Agency has been advised that if this does not happen, there will be a further NSMC plenary before the end of the year where nominations can be brought forward.

Business Plans / Corporate Plan

The 2018, 2019 and 2020 Business Plans will be brought to the NSMC Language Sectoral on 27th November for retrospective approval. As we understand it, the 2017 BP is not to be brought forward, due to a technical issue.

The 2021 BP and 2020-22 Corporate Plan will be brought to a future meeting for approval and interim measures are currently being put in place by Sponsor Departments to provide for funds to be released pending BP and CP approval.

Covid-19 Additional Resources

The Agency has been awarded £850,000 in additional resources from the £29million Barnett consequential for culture.

Border Counties Covid-19 Resilience Fund

The Agency has undertaken a funding call for small grants of up to €3,000 for community and voluntary groups in the Border Counties, along similar lines to those being offered in Northern Ireland via the additional Barnett consequential funds. The programme was substantially over subscribed and we allocated additional resources to meet the level of need, awarding a total of €56,679 to 21 groups.

Potential Language Body Budget Increase

Discussion is ongoing between Sponsor Departments in relation to the potential for an increase in the baseline budget of the NSLB. The discussion has been impacted by the announcement of an increase in the baseline in the recent RoI budget statement, as yet unspecified, but within the context of a €14.5million increase on the budget for the Gaeltacht and Irish Language sectors.

Approval of ongoing Grants for 2021.

The Board agreed that authority to approve proposals for outstanding Core Funding, Community Impact and FAS Other funding proposals would be delegated to a group of three members, Mr Gamble, Ms Andrews and Mr Carlisle, with papers to be forwarded as soon as they are ready.

11. AOB

Mr Crozier advised the Board that he had been invited by DfC to participate as a member of an expert panel to be established to lead work on the development of the new Ulster-Scots Strategy, pursuant to the NDNA agreement and requested the Board's endorsement of his participation. The Board noted that this work was to be undertaken outside of work and agreed that Mr Crozier should accept the role.

12. Date of Next Board Meeting

Members agreed next meeting 17th December 2020 with arrangements to be confirmed.

Signed:

Dated:

**Tha Boord o Ulster-Scotch
187th Board Meeting
17th December 2020
Ulster-Scots Agency
6.15PM via Zoom**

Present:	Mr Keith Gamble (Chairman)
	Ms. Julie Andrews
	Mr. Iain Carlisle
In Attendance:	Mr. Ian Crozier, Chief Executive
	Mr. Richard Hanna, Director of Education & Language
	Mr. David McCallum, Director of Corporate Services
	Ms. Gillian McMaster, Director of Development
Apologies:	Mr. David McNarry
Recording Secretary:	Ms Lorna Elliott (HR/Office Manager)

4. Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of 26th November 2020 were noted and approved by the Board.

5. Matters Arising

All matters arising were dealt with elsewhere on the agenda.

6. Progress Report

Mr Crozier delivered the detail on the Progress Report, which was noted by the Board.

7. Funding Proposals

Music Service Pipes and Drums

Mr McCallum presented a paper in respect of annual funding for MSPD to support the teaching of the Ulster-Scots Agency Juvenile Pipe Band. The paper was approved by the Board.

Mr Crozier left the meeting

Community Impact Programme

Mr McCallum presented a paper recommending the extension of the three existing Community Impact Projects: Derry and Raphoe Action; The Schomberg Society and Small Steps for 12 months to the end of 2021. The paper was approved by the Board.

Mr Crozier returned to the meeting

Core Funding

Mr McCallum presented a paper recommending core funding for the Ulster-Scots Community Network and Monreagh Ulster-Scots Heritage Centre for 2021. The paper was approved by the Board.

Ms Andrews and Mr Crozier left the meeting

Ulster-Scots Covid-19 Resilience Fund – Language Grants

Mr McCallum presented a paper in respect of the Language Grant stream of the Ulster-Scots Covid-19 Resilience Fund. The Board approved the paper, including grant approvals for:

- Ulster-Scots Community Network
- Belfast Library & Society for Promoting Knowledge (The Linenhall Library)
- The Schomberg Society
- Ards Community Network
- Small Steps

Ms Andrews and Mr Crozier returned to the meeting.

In response to a member's question, Mr Crozier confirmed that the Ards Community Network was an established group that was new to the Agency.

8. Finance Paper

The report was presented by Mr McCallum and noted by the Board.

Internal Audit

The following audits were completed during 2020:

- Finance
- IT Security, Business Continuity Plan & Disaster Recovery;
- GDPR.
- Complaints, Gifts & Hospitality
- Drawdown Procedure
- Safeguarding
- Grants Management and Government Funding Database

All of the audits resulted in **satisfactory** assurance ratings and the recommendations are in the process of being implemented.

Annual Accounts

2018 – The Accounts were certified 23rd December 2019. The Agency’s accounts and annual report are now in the process for laying, DFC advised 10th December 2020 that they hope to have them laid in both jurisdictions in the next couple of weeks.

2019 - The 2019 audit commenced the week beginning 30th March 2020 and the draft accounts submitted to the departments 24th March 2020. The audit is continuing remotely and the lead auditor has changed due to illness. The Substantive testing took place 8th December 2020 and NIAO have now informed the Agency that they will not be certified until the after the year end.

Annual Budget

The Agency carried out the necessary re-profiling of the Budget in the last quarter of 2020 and there had been variances due to Covid-19 pandemic. Underspends will be reallocated to fund other projects.

We have also been able to fund projects and interventions that we would not have been able to under normal operating conditions. The reallocations have included a number of partnership agreements which enables us to effectively increase the amount of money being spent on Ulster-Scots projects. These partners include the Gamble library, Monaghan County Museum and the Linenhall Library.

Gifts & Hospitality

The report was noted by the Board.

Statutory Obligations Report

The report was noted by the Board.

Prompt Payments

The report was noted by the Board.

HR Report

The report was noted by the Board.

Mr McCallum advised that a new Marketing Officer joined the Agency in December and one staff member would be commencing a career break 1st February 2021 for one year.

9. Education Report

Mr Hanna presented a verbal report to the Board and advised that only significant update following on from last month's meeting was that the Ulster-Scots Walking Tours project in partnership with Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund completed and will be launched in January 2021 on the WalkNI.com website.

The report was noted by the Board.

10. CEO Report

Mr Crozier spoke to his CEO report.

Business Plans / Corporate Plan

The 2018, 2019 and 2020 Business Plans were approved at the NSMC Institutional Meeting on 16th December 2020.

The 2017 Business Plans for the NSLB have not been brought for approval. This is due to the Department of Finance in Northern Ireland refusing approval on the basis of a perceived issue of illegal spend relating to the Ulster-Scots Agency. The issue relates to the fact that the Agency drew down an amount of funds for the year which exceeded our approved cash ceiling by £14,027. However, the Agency drew down its funds on the basis of figures provided by DfC, which subsequently proved incorrect. When the Department's error was identified, it was quickly corrected and there was no cost to the public purse. The incident had no impact on the audit for 2017 and it was not raised in the RTTCWG. The Agency is in discussion with a range of parties to determine whether and how this can be resolved.

The 2021 BP and 2020-22 Corporate Plan will be brought to a future NSMC meeting for approval and interim measures are currently being put in place by Sponsor Departments to provide for funds to be released in the early part of 2021 pending BP and CP approval.

HR Matters

Mr Crozier confirmed that following intervention from the DfC Minister, Caral NiChuilin, the Agency have received confirmation from the Department of Finance that the Director of Development's secondment to the Agency will be extended for a further year, but will end in December 2021. DfC has given a commitment to help us to fill the post in a timely way before the Director returns to NICS.

The report was noted by the Board.

11. AOB

There was no other business.

12. Date of Next Board Meeting

Members provisionally agreed 20th January 2021 @ 6.15pm.

Signed:

Dated: