



Ulster-Scots Agency
Boord o Ulstèr-Scotch

Board Decisions 2021

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**Tha Boord o Ulster-Scotch
188th Board Meeting
27th January 2021
Ulster-Scots Agency
6.00PM 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 17th December 2020 were noted and approved by the Board.

5. Matters Arising

Any matters arising were covered elsewhere on the agenda.

6. Progress Report

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

The progress presented the Year End position and it was noted that by the Board that what is written in the Annual Report would be important, to fully explain the progress report and why some targets have not been met.

Mr Crozier advised that as the Annual Report cannot be published until accounts are finalised in both jurisdictions that the Agency may want to create a summary document for issue in a more timely way.

7. Finance Paper

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

Internal Audit

The following audits were carried out 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 internal audits undertaken achieved **satisfactory** assurance ratings and the recommendations are in the process of being implemented. The follow-up audit took place in early December, but the Annual Assurance Statement has not yet been received.

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 hoped to have them laid in both jurisdictions in the next couple of weeks – to date this has not happened.

2019 – Draft accounts for 2019 were submitted to Sponsor Departments on 24th March 2020. The 2019 audit commenced w/c 30th March 2020. The audit timescale was impacted by a move to remote working and the substitution of lead auditors due to illness. The substantive testing took place 8th December 2020 and NIAO have advised the Agency that they will not be certified until early 2021.

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 were 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.

The Board noted the Year End position.

Mr Gamble congratulated the Agency and its staff for Year End position and hoped it would be reflected positively moving forward.

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.

Annual Audit Report

The report was noted by the Board.

Audit Recommendations

The report was noted by the Board.

Risk Registers

The report was noted by the Board

Policy Revisions

The Policy revisions listed were approved by the Board:

- Disciplinary & Grievance Procedure
- IT Security Policy

- Shared Parental Leave
- FOI
- Business Case Policy
- GDPR Policy

Disposal Schedule

The board approved the disposal request presented to the Board.

8. Corporate Plan 2020-2022 and 2021 Business Plan

Mr Crozier presented the Corporate Plan 2020-2022 to the Board for noting. This had previously been approved by the Board but was being tabled again as it was about to go to NSMC for approval. The Board confirmed its approval for the plan.

Mr Crozier presented the draft 2021 Business Plan for approval. After discussion this was approved by the Board.

Priorities for Potential 2021 Budget Increase

Further to ongoing discussion with Sponsor Departments in relation to the budget for 2021, Mr Crozier presented proposals in relation to how potential budget uplift scenarios of 10% and 20% could be utilised. After discussion, the Board endorsed the proposals.

9. CEO Report

Mr Crozier presented the CEO report which was noted by the Board.

Mr Crozier advised that The Agency had been awarded an additional £430,000 in relation to the Covid-19 resilience fund to support the pressure of £130k over-subscription on the first Small Grants call and £300k to support a second Small Grants call. In respect of the second call, the Agency will process the grants but the Department will pay due to DoF restrictions on additional cash being issued to the Agency without an approved Business Plan and Budget in place. The Agency will make contact with the Department to confirm how these payments will be made.

Mr Gamble asked whether there was a risk that Sponsor Departments would ask how the Agency had been able to carry this significant additional piece of work without deducting anything from the allocation to cover administration. Mr Crozier explained that this had been managed through a combination of using underspent resources from vacant posts to cover the cost of an agency worker; utilising unused travel time from development staff; and running up high levels of flexi/toil across a range of staff, which everyone involved had been content to do given that it was maximising the resources being made available to the Ulster-Scots community. Within Agency policies, the Agency would allow staff to use their toil/flexi instead of annual leave and

then carry over their annual leave under the Covid-19 leave arrangements, which allow it to be taken over a period of several years, at times which suit business need. Mr Crozier emphasized that it was only due to the very exceptional circumstances of Covid-19 that had enabled the Agency to deliver such a large piece of work within existing resources.

Captial Resources

Ms McMaster spoke on the UTC Gamble Library project, which had allowed for the preservation of 60 key texts and a range of improvements to storage conditions at the library. Ms McMaster confirmed a report would follow, then a site visit when guidelines permit.

The report was noted by the Board.

10. AOB

The Board agreed to receive the Draft Disability Plan for comment prior to going out for consultation.

12. Date of Next Board Meeting

Next two meetings agreed as follows:

24th February 2021, 6.00pm via Zoom

24th March 2021, 6.00pm via Zoom

Signed:

Dated:

**Tha Boord o Ulster-Scotch
189th Board Meeting
24th February 2021
Ulster-Scots Agency
6.00PM 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 27th January 2021 were noted and approved by the Board.

5. Matters Arising

Any matters arising were covered elsewhere on the agenda.

6. Progress Report

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

Mr Hanna confirmed that the Discover Ulster-Scots website would still be going live in the first Quarter of 2021. Mr Carlisle offered assistance with further website content on Bands should it be required.

Mr McCallum advised that the newspaper tender would be going live soon and the tender is for the printing of four papers this year. There will be still be the same amount of content produced but split over four papers rather than six as previously.

7. Finance Paper

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

Internal Audit

The preliminary Schedule of Audits which have been agreed for 2021 will be issued to the Audit & Risk Committee which will include:

- Payroll
- Governance
- Outreach and Education
- HR
- Grants

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 17th February 2021 that they will be laid in both jurisdictions 1st March 2021.

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 informed the Agency that they will not be certified until early 2021. We have received the RTCWG and it has been responded to and returned. There are no recommendations on the report.

2020 – Work is underway on the 2020 accounts and aiming for the 31st March deadline to submit to the Departments.

Annual Budget

The 2020 budget to date has not been agreed by NSMC, we expect this to take place 31st March 2021. At this time we are working to the 2016 figure and over committing the budget to allow room for the unpredictability of the current pandemic situation.

Gifts & Hospitality

The report was noted by the Board.

Statutory Obligations Report

It was noted that the Agency received two Freedom of Information requests and both have responses have been issued. The Board noted the report.

Prompt Payments

The report was noted by the Board.

HR Report

The report was noted by the Board.

7.1 Corefunded Reports 2020 – Monreagh

Reports were noted by the Board.

7.2 Corefunded Reports 2020 – USCN

Reports were noted by the Board.

8. CEO Report

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

Board members reflected on the very positive outcome of the Covid-19 funding initiative and passed on congratulations to the staff team.

9. AOB

Board members were asked to revert as soon as possible with any comments on the Disability Action Plan.

10. Date of Next Board Meeting

Next four meetings agreed as follows:

Wednesday 24th March 2021 @6.00pm via Zoom

Thursday 29th April 2021 @6.00pm via Zoom

Thursday 27th May 2021 @6.00pm via Zoom

Wednesday 23rd June 2021 @6.00pm via Zoom

Signed:

Dated:

**Tha Boord o Ulster-Scotch
190th Board Meeting
24th March 2021
Ulster-Scots Agency
6.00PM via Zoom**

Present:	Mr Keith Gamble (Chairman)
	Ms. Julie Andrews
	Mr. Iain Carlisle
	Mr. David McNarry
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)

4. Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of 24th February 2021 were noted and approved by the Board.

5. Matters Arising

Any matters arising were covered elsewhere on the agenda.

6. Progress Report

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

Mr Crozier explained that some targets had not yet commenced and this was due to staff attentions being redirected to administering the Covid-19 Resilience Funding at present but assured the Board that the Educational targets would be resumed later in the year. One target had already been completed relating to the delivery of promotional programme in relation to the Census.

Mr McCallum provided confirmation that the tender for printing the newspaper was currently out to tender and would close over the next week. The main issue was a distribution problem and it was agreed that digital articles would be promoted where possible in conjunction with the paper.

7. Finance Paper

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

Internal Audit

The preliminary Schedule of Audits which have been agreed for 2021 with Payroll, HR and Fixed Assets scheduled for end of April and beginning of May.

Annual Accounts

2018 – The Accounts were laid in both jurisdictions 1st March 2021.

2019 - The Agency accounts are complete along with the Annual Report and are with Foras for consolidation and translation. Once this process is complete we can move to signing the accounts.

2020 – Work is underway on the 2020 accounts and aiming for the 31st March deadline to submit to the Departments. The Accounts will be forwarded to the Board as soon as they are complete.

Annual Budget

The 2020 budget to date has not been agreed by NSMC, we expect this to take place 31st March 2021. At this time we are working to the 2016 figure and over committing the budget to allow room for the unpredictability of the current pandemic situation.

Performance Actual Vs Budget

Full nominal review to be carried out at the end of Quarter One (31/01/2021) and then re-profiling or reallocating can commence if required.

Gifts & Hospitality

The report was noted by the Board.

Statutory Obligations Report

The Board noted the report.

Prompt Payments

The report was noted by the Board.

HR Report

The report was noted by the Board.

7.1 Policy Update

The Policy revisions listed were approved by the Board:

- Fixed Asset Policy & Procedures
- Display Screen Equipment (DSE)
- Email Usage Policy
- Advanced Payment Season Ticket Policy
- Dignity at Work Policy
- Equipment Loan Policy

7.2 Business Case Policy

The Board approved the new Business Case Policy to include new Business Case Module.

7.3 Social Media Report

Mr McCallum presented report to the Board. The report was noted by the Board and request was made that such a detailed Social Media Report should be presented on a quarterly basis.

8. CEO Report

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

Board members reflected on the very positive outcome of the Covid-19 funding initiative and passed on congratulations to the staff team.

9. Census

Ms McMaster presented a Census report to the Board. The Agency ran a successful promotional campaign, including social media, radio and print advertising in 17 local newspapers.

Ms Andrews commented on the visibility of the campaign, which she had seen on a range of mediums.

10. AOB

There was no other business.

11. Date of Next Board Meeting

Next three meetings agreed as follows:

Thursday 29th April 2021 @6.00pm via Zoom

Thursday 27th May 2021 @6.00pm via Zoom

Wednesday 23rd June 2021 @6.00pm via Zoom

Signed:

Dated:

**Tha Boord o Ulster-Scotch
191st Board Meeting
29th April 2021
Ulster-Scots Agency
6.30PM via Zoom**

Present:	Mr Keith Gamble (Chairman)
	Ms. Julie Andrews
	Mr. David McNarry
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. Iain Carlisle
Recording Secretary:	Ms. Lorna Elliott (HR/Office Manager)

4. Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of 24th March 2021 were noted and approved by the Board.

5. Matters Arising

Mr Crozier advised that the scheduled NSMC meeting which was due to consider board appointments and outstanding Corporate and Business Plans had been cancelled and a subsequently rescheduled meeting had also not taken place due to issues with ministerial availability. It was hoped that the papers would be taken at a Transport sectoral planned for 30th April and an update was awaited.

6. Progress Report

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

7. Finance Paper

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

Internal Audit

Fixed Asset almost completed with one potential recommendation regarding additional signatures on the fixed asset register. Payroll audit due to commence next month.

Annual Accounts

2019 – Accounts signed of 23rd April 2021 and now awaiting a laying date.

2020 – Work is underway on the 2020 accounts and issued to Board 26th March 2021 and submitted to the Departments by specified timetables.

Annual Budget

The 2020 budget to date has not been agreed by NSMC, we expect this to take place 31st March 2021. At this time we are working to the 2016 figure and over committing the budget to allow room for the unpredictability of the current pandemic situation.

Performance Actual Vs Budget

Biggest variance is 'Working with Others' and is due to the late drawdown of core funding from USCN. Education's variance is due to slow return of grant claims.

Fraud Report

Mr McCallum updated the Board in relation to an ongoing potential fraud issue.

Gifts & Hospitality

The report was noted by the Board.

Statutory Obligations Report

The Board noted the report showing one Freedom of Information request and response issued within statutory time frames.

The potential Fraud Issue has been raised on the report.

Prompt Payments

The report was noted by the Board.

HR Report

The report was noted by the Board.

7.1 Policy Update

The Policy revisions listed were approved by the Board to include:

- Bank Procedures
- Income, debtors & Petty Cash

7.2 Risk Register

The Board noted the report.

7.3 Marketing Report

Mr McCallum presented the report to the Board.

Mr McCallum confirmed that the newspaper tender was unsuccessful even after a week's extension on the return deadline date. Mr McCallum undertook to explore the matter further and report back to a future meeting.

8. **AOB**

Mr Crozier alerted the Board to the possibility of some adverse press coverage following recent media enquiries.

Mr Crozier advised the Board that our Sponsor Branch in DfC had recently raised the possibility that a recent court case involving the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland may have implications for the operation of the Agency. The Department is awaiting legal advice from DSO and will revert to us in due course.

Mr McCallum advised that the Grants Officer vacancy was open for applications, closing on 28th May and that the Music and Dance Tuition funding round is now open.

9. **Date of Next Board Meeting**

Next two meetings agreed as follows:

Thursday 27th May 2021 @6.00pm via Zoom

Wednesday 23rd June 2021 @6.00pm via Zoom

Signed:

Dated:

192nd Board Meeting
11th May 2021

Present:	Mr Keith Gamble (Chairman)
	Ms. Julie Andrews
	Mr. David McNarry
	Mr. Allen McAdam
	Mr. Freddie Kettyle
	Mr. Iain Carlisle
	Mrs. Lavinia Tilson
In Attendance:	Mr. Ian Crozier, Chief Executive
	Mr. David McCallum, Director of Corporate Services
	Ms. Gillian McMaster, Director of Development
Apologies:	Ms. Karyn Devenney

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and expressed his hope that the Board would soon be able to meet in person to formally welcome newly appointed members.

The Chief Executive outlined the background to the Freedom of Information request which had resulted in the calling of a special meeting of the Board. He confirmed that the Agency generally operated on the principle of disclosure however in this instance officials had taken the view that an exemption may be engaged and a decision was required from the Board with regards how to proceed.

He apologised for the short timeframe for consideration but explained that it was only as officials reviewed the legislation more fully that they became aware that the decision making role for such matters rested with the Board and not the Chief Executive.

Members' attention was drawn to the list of material which officials had identified for consideration.

In light of the Agency’s plans to engage with the Ulster-Scots community both formally and informally the Board was invited to consider whether an exemption was engaged under section 36(2)(b)(ii).

The Chief Executive then explained the concerns officials had with regards to sharing information with third party organisations outside of the sector ahead of concluding a consultation exercise with the wider Ulster-Scots community. Reference was made to the difficult conversations which had already been had amongst the Board on this matter and the need to have similarly frank discussions within the community in order to reach a broad consensus.

The Chair confirmed that the proposed approach would be the same regardless of who was requesting the information and that the refusal to disclose in this instance was to ensure that no third party unduly influenced ongoing consultation and subsequent policy development. The Chief Executive reiterated that there would be opportunities for third party organisations such as the applicant to discuss these matters with the Agency once consultation with the Ulster-Scots community was complete.

There was a consensus amongst members that in this instance it was reasonable to engage the exemption outlined in Section 36(2)(b)(ii) and (c) in order to ensure that the community had the freedom to shape the policy which could have a bearing on the protections they could expect as a result of designation as a national minority within the UK.

The Chair agreed to circulate a minute to Members for agreement ahead of the formal response issuing to Mr Holder.

Signed:

Dated:

**Tha Boord o Ulster-Scotch
193rd Board Meeting
27th May 2021
Ulster-Scots Agency
6.00PM via Zoom**

Present:	Mr Keith Gamble (Chairman)
	Ms. Julie Andrews
	Mr. David McNarry
	Mr Freddie Kettyle
	Mr Allen McAdam
	Ms Lavinia Tilson
In Attendance:	Mr. David McCallum, Director of Corporate Services
Apologies:	Mr Iain Carlisle
	Ms Gillian McMaster
	Mr Ian Crozier
Recording Secretary:	Ms. Lorna Elliott (HR/Office Manager)

4. FOI Related Papers

Mr Gamble updated the Board following a review of the CEO report and the Minute in question. It was found that the Minute was almost word for word that of the CEO report. Mr Gamble proposed that the relevant section of the CEO report would be issued on the basis the Minute is already on the Agency website.

The Board were in agreement with this proposal.

5. AOB

Mr McCallum issued a Sub-Committee membership Request. It was agreed that all Board members would return their response by Tuesday 1st June 2021.

Mr McAdam confirmed he would be part of the Audit & Risk Committee.

Mr Freddie Kettle confirmed he would be part of the Grants Committee.

6. Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 23rd June 2021 @6.00pm via Zoom

Signed:

Dated:

**Tha Boord o Ulster-Scotch
194th Board Meeting
23rd June 2021
Ulster-Scots Agency
6.30PM via Zoom**

Present:	Mr Keith Gamble (Chairman)
	Ms Lavinia Tilson
	Mr Freddie Kettyle (Vice Chair)
	Mr Allen McAdam
	Ms Julie Andrews
In Attendance:	Mr Ian Crozier, Chief Executive Officer
	Mr David McCallum, Director of Corporate Services
	Mr Richard Hanna, Director of Educational & Language
	Ms Gillian McMaster, Director of Development
Apologies:	Ms Karyn Devenney
	Mr Iain Carlisle
	Mr David McNarry
Recording Secretary:	Ms Lorna Elliott (HR/Office Manager)

4. Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes of the meetings on 29th April, 11th May and 27th May were noted and approved by the Board.

5. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

6. Progress Report

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

7. Finance Paper

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

Internal Audit

2021 Internal Audit now underway with Fixed Assets, Payroll and HR audits having been completed with satisfactory ratings achieved. The Procurement audit is scheduled to commence 19th July 2021.

Annual Accounts

2019 – Accounts signed off 23rd April 2021 and following a final review in May 2021 the accounts are now with Foras for translation.

2020 – Work is ongoing and Annual Accounts have been submitted to Sponsor Departments within specified timescales.

Annual Budget

Mr McCallum advised that the 2021 baseline budget had been approved by the NSMC in May. The agreed baseline uplift of £206k had been agreed by Sponsor and Finance Departments, but not yet by full NSMC, but Departments are content that we begin to draw down the additional funds from July.

Performance Actual Vs Budget

Mr McCallum updated the Board on the Performance Actual Vs Budget and advised that the relaxation of restrictions surrounding Covid-19 presented an opportunity to re-profile the budget. The overall budget is over committed at this time due to uncertainty around what activity we will be able to carry out later in the year.

Fraud Report

Mr McCallum updated the Board in relation to the previously reported potential fraud issue. The matter has been resolved without loss to the Agency or the funded group which had been the target of an external fraud.

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

Mr McCallum updated the board and advised that the permanent vacancies of Grants Officer and Digital Marketing Officer were filled during June 2021. The report was noted by the Board.

7.1 Policy Update

The Policy revisions listed were approved by the Board:

- Employee Exit Policy

7.2 Risk Register

Mr McCallum proposed that Cyber Security should be included as a separate item to IT on the Risk register, the Board approved this recommendation and the full report was noted by the Board.

7.3 Marketing Report

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

7.4 2020 and 2021 Non-Industrial Pay Awards

Mr McCallum presented the recommendations to the Board which were unanimously approved.

8. Financial Memorandum

Mr Crozier provided an update on the Financial Memorandum and advised that a document would be available to the Board by the next meeting, the update was noted by the Board.

9. Committee Terms of Reference

Mr McCallum delivered the detail on the terms of reference for the Board Sub Committees listed below, which were noted and agreed by the Board.

- 9.1 Audit & Risk Committee Terms of Reference
- 9.2 Grants & Grants Appeal Committees Terms of Reference
- 9.3 Personnel Committee Terms of Reference
- 9.4 Policy Committee Terms of Reference

10. Education Report

Mr Hanna delivered the detail on the Education Report, which was noted by the Board.

11. CEO Report

Mr Crozier delivered the detail on the CEO report, which was noted by the Board.

12. AOB

Members discussed the potential for return to more normalized working arrangements for staff. Mr Crozier advised that preparations were in place for returning to the office, the main stumbling block remained the regulations requiring people to work from home where possible, which had not yet been relaxed.

13. Date of Next Board Meeting

To be agreed.

Signed:

Dated: