



MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING: 13TH DECEMBER 2022

11am, Tuesday 13th December 2022
Boardroom, Northern Ireland Screen

Present: David Sterling (Chair), Róise Ní Bhaoill, Michael Fanning, Peter Weil, Tom Gray, Carmel Mullan, Fionnuala Deane, Greg Maguire, Susan Picken

In attendance: Richard Williams (CEO), Anne Dorbie (Chief Operating Officer), Andrew Reid (Head of Production), Áine Walsh (Head of ILBF), Mary McVey (Marketing Manager), Bernard McCloskey (Head of Education), Laura Higgins (Accountant), Marie Shivers (PA to CEO)

Apologies: Mark Huffam, Richard Hanna, Brenda Romero, Francis Jones (Head of Archive), David McConnell (Education and Careers Manager)

No conflicts of interest were noted.

1.0 Minutes of the Board meetings of 13th September 2022

1.1 The Board agreed the draft minutes were an accurate reflection of the last meeting and they were signed.

2.0 Chair's business

2.1 The Chair thanked Board members for undertaking the recent annual assessments. It had been a good opportunity to meet members in person and the feedback was very helpful. Coming out of those meetings was the sense that we could be perceived as being too Belfast centric and that we should hold Board meetings in alternative venues and also invite other people to them. The Chair suggested therefore that our next meeting be held in the North West with another potential future venue being the new Ulster University boardroom. Marie will explore possible options.

2.2 There was also interest from Board members to sit on other Committees and the Chair will look at this in Spring 2023. In accordance with Audit Office guidance, we are obliged to undertake a Board Effectiveness exercise every year. The last one was carried out in 2021 with no issues identified and as the Chair is still new to post, it was decided that the next exercise be undertaken in 2023.

2.3 The Chair and CEO both attended a DfE stakeholder day where the Secretary of State set a principal responsibility that departments must control and manage expenditure. DfE's budget for the current financial year seems fine with no expectation that they will want to retrieve money. The outlook for next year however is more difficult. The department may have to cope with some cuts, at least 3.5% but could be significantly more.

3.0 CEO's Report including Performance Indicator Report and Investment Report

3.1 The pace is picking up for Nothing Compares and we would be disappointed at this stage if it didn't get Oscar nominated. TV drama is looking good for returning series next year. Both large-scale projects are moving forward and we are confident they will come through.

Scripted is quiet at the moment but there is not much we can do at this stage. We are making good headway with getting the value of Archive up the chain, we held a series of good meetings with DfC, the W5 show and tell with Nerve Belfast went well as did Exhibition season.

- 3.2 The foundations are in at Belfast Harbour Studios, the tendering process for an industrial partner is formally underway, pre-tender information is out and the tender is scheduled to go out on 20th December.
- 3.3 We have bid for BFI Cluster funding, which is primarily additional skills funding of £600-£700,000 a year for 3 years. As far as we are aware, we are the only Northern Ireland bid.
- 3.4 DfE have made it clear that they will prioritise funding through the prism of 10X. 10X has become a three-pillar vision, innovation is still the strongest pillar, but inclusion and sustainability now sit alongside it. We head into the process with a certain amount of optimism and will submit a scoping document to DfE before Christmas.

KPI Report

- 3.5 The KPI Report was noted.

Investment Report

- 3.6 The Investment Report was noted.

4.0 Finance, Audit and Governance

Risk Register

- 4.1 Looking into the new financial year there is a cyclical nature to public funding challenges and we will review again for the next risk register. The CEO pointed out that language funding remains the longest standing risk which we still regard as a technical risk as opposed to a real risk. The Funds have made a lot of commitments into next year while having no formal commitment to cover them. BFI have triggered the process to flow money to us next year though they have had no confirmation from DCMS.
- 4.2 Good progress is being made on cyber security and data protection audit recommendations. We have developed an action plan and are 90% of the way through it with some actions ongoing. These policies are live documents and will continue to be updated as we go through the various accreditation processes.
- 4.3 A Digital Archive working group has been set up and will report back to the Board at the March meeting. Francis Jones is heading up this area and is making good progress. Connected to this is the copyright issue with BFI which we expect to drop off the register either at the next or following meeting.
- 4.4 The Board approved the risk register.

Audit and Risk Committee Update

- 4.5 Carmel Mullan briefed on the key points of the recent meeting noting that the IT Security Policy is a live issue and will continue to be and therefore it is important to ensure that staff

undertake a programme of continuous training. It was agreed to review this policy every six months.

- 4.6 Tom Gray added that as a document at this point in time the IT Security Policy is absolutely fine but as the environment is continually moving and best practice advice is continually evolving, we need to ensure that we follow national cyber security recommendations and guidance and keep it constantly reviewed. Staff need to be trained at least once a year and a good recommendation from the Cyber Security Centre is make training relevant to the employees' personal life as well. When asked about the potential for ISO 27001 accreditation, it was decided that it would be something to look at but maintaining it could be difficult and could therefore lead to a negative message if not maintained. The Board approved this policy.
- 4.7 The Data Protection Policy and GDPR principles have been drawn up. A data breach was noted. In accordance with ICO guidelines, the breach wasn't reported to the ICO due to its scale and nature. Internal Audit will be reviewing this area in due course, and all staff are currently undergoing cyber security and data protection training. The Board approved this policy.
- 4.8 Four Direct Award Contracts require Board approval. Strategy launch material came late but we have retrospective approval from CPD, the AV contract turned out to be an exchange rate difference which resulted in a total slightly over £5k. The final two are training for The Pixel Mill and CPD approval has already been received. The Board approved the Direct Award Contracts.
- 4.9 The Partnership Agreement with DfE is not yet agreed and an ALB Review will take place next year.
- 4.10 Carmel concluded that the statutory accounts had now been signed and completed. We are still waiting on the final Report to Those Charged with Governance which is expected in the new year but there is nothing in it to bring to the Board's attention.

Management Accounts to 31st January 2021

- 4.11 The accounts are on track coming into quarter 3. Cashflow is typically slow up to this point. £1.5m was awarded in the first quarter and we are anticipating £3.3m to December. ILBF is £1m behind budget with £1.1m to go out in December. USBF have spent the full budget to October with £830,000 of deferred income to utilise until the end of the year. Lottery, PRONI, BAI and BFI completely on track.
- 4.12 We have incorporated a 2.5% uplift into the budget for salary increases, in line with the guidance provided by the department. It was noted that at a 1% higher rate (ie 3.5%) there could be an extra £20,000 needed which could become a concern. We don't have a timeline for this due to current political situation.

Strategic Resources Committee Update

- 4.13 A lot of what was discussed at the last meeting has been covered above. The Safeguarding Policy reflects best practice. It has just been brought up to date and the intention is to work more closely with the industry around safeguarding.

- 4.14 The Disability Action Plan is a statutory duty. It has been submitted to the Equality Commission and we are awaiting their comments. The SMT have agreed the action points and continue to monitor progress.
- 4.15 The Diversity Action Plan will be brought to the next meeting. We are working towards the Diversity Mark NI bronze award and will bring through Committee and the Board in the next quarter. A working group has been set up to work through this process.
- 4.16 The Board approved the Safeguarding Policy and Disability Action Plan.

5.0 Other Committee Updates

CEFFWG

- 5.1 Scheduling for festival season needs to be looked at and spread out if possible. Figures were down 5-10% which could be down to split audiences due to festival clashes. QFT has had strong audience figures. Cinemagic had a successful festival with a lot of online activity. The Foodbank screenings went down particularly well. Nerve Centre's Our Place in Space hit 1.4m attendance. Belfast Stories is currently in the early stages of procurement for architects and the interpretive design team. An updated business case will be developed early next year. The consultation process was extensive and has just been completed. The findings are still being reviewed but feedback from the screen sector was very positive.
- 5.2 David McConnell added that Stephen McGown is carrying out a stakeholder consultation and we will engage with him and DfC during this process.

Investment Cte

- 5.3 Peter Weil updated the Board on the work of the Investment Committee including the successful broadcast of two factual/entertainment series, B&B By the Sea and Mini Matchmakers, from local company Afro-Mic Productions; the launch of a new video interactive Gaelic football game; and three children's animation series from Paper Owl Films. Peter acknowledged the work of the Investment Committee and thanked them and Andrew Reid for their hard work this year.

Skills/training

- 5.4 We currently have 114 trainees on our books. The rollout of CINE is going well and recruitment is taking place continuously with large numbers of applications being received. CINE is a complex structure in that it is funded by DfC to the BBC who sub-contracts to us. Due to future staffing changes within the BBC we need to ensure that their awareness of CINE continues. We intend to look at whether we could facilitate a CINE trainee within NI Screen in the new year. We ask the screen industry to be open minded about embracing social inclusion, therefore it is only fair that we do the same.
- 5.5 The BFI are creating seven clusters around the UK, one in each of the nations and 4 scattered around England. We have put in a bid with 3 strands: pathways for further education, CPD for existing crew, and future technologies for AR, VR and post-production. Our aim is to set up a steering group for these areas to make decisions on how the money will be spent.
- 5.6 Greg Maguire asked if we could cope with the additional challenges around pastoral care for CINE trainees. We are still going through a learning process with CINE but the team have

developed an excellent pathway, including risk assessments at the start of placements and the team work very closely with all the placement companies. We have to make it work for the companies or the scheme won't work at all. The Chair noted that it was encouraging that there is such demand for the scheme.

SECWG

- 5.7 Bernard McCloskey updated the Board on the recent meeting. Schools seem to be back to their normal day to day routine although some challenges remain. There was a huge turnout at the recent MIA awards in Belfast and Derry~Londonderry with large numbers of industry members there to talk to students afterwards. CLCs are delivering full programmes face to face and also continue online after school sessions, particularly for teachers. The Amma Centre are seeing an increase in take up for teacher courses which is positive. Into Film's afterschool film clubs took a hit during Covid so they ran a festival in October which was well attended. David McConnell added that they are keeping an eye on potential industrial action. The Kippie programme – encouraging young girls into games - is a great initiative and going very well. The Permanent Secretary recently undertook a successful visit to W5.

ILBF

- 5.8 Roise Ni Bhaoill noted that £1.6m had been allocated at the last funding round including to a six-part drama series with TG4 in collaboration with a Galway company. There could be a potential further series, so we are looking forward to the outcome of that. Another drama feature funded was around the rapping trio, Kneecap. This project should be popular with the younger demographic but also may attract criticism. Doireann Nic Dhomhnaill ran two sessions at the recent Belfast Media Festival, one on TV and one on Children's TV and the new TG4 dedicated channel for children. TG4 has £3m available for original programming for children and the Fund is very keen that the sector here applies for some of that money.

USBF

- 5.9 There is a challenge going into the next year not having the same level of funding as last year and we will struggle to get the budget to fit. BBCNI have a commissioning round open, and we envisage the scenario where they present more than we can fund. Coverage has been positive. Ulster University had a good event showcasing Making NI, a web project originally designed to be part of the centenary activities of NI. We will push its profile out to schools although it is geared to the older key stage and adults. We have to decide whether to support one or two new trainees during 2023.

NIHAWG

- 5.10 We are working with UTV and PRONI to negotiate an extension to our agreement to utilise the UTV archive. This is going well and we are hopeful that it will be renewed. We are also working on dealing with sensitive content, what support is needed and what training is available for archive staff. We are working with QUB, PRONI, BBC NI and BFI on this and hope to have the first draft of a report by March. A trailer of 'Yer Man in Spain', footage of the Northern Ireland football squad sending shockwaves through the 1982 World Cup created by our Digital Film Archive was shown.

6.0 Marketing Calendar

- 6.1 Award season is ramping up and the Oscars Wilde event will take place in Los Angeles in March next year. The last few delegations of the year were well attended in person. Dungeons and Dragons release date is set for 7th April.
- 6.2 The CEO noted that the strategy launch event was a huge success, to Mary's credit. The Chair added that it was positive that two Ministers turned up, were engaged and stayed to the end.

7.0 Any Other Business

- 7.1 Tom Gray noted that a forthcoming EU AI act will come into law early next year. The implications are unknown but he suggested we check to see what AI has been deployed in our environment, especially in terms of archive as there will be AI tools used to access the archive. With 10X's innovation mandate, there are probably some emerging technologies and trends to discuss as a Board. Generative AI will have an impact on the screen sector and it would be good to get ahead of this. Greg added that it would be good to get an understanding of the issues and capabilities to inform the Board.
- 7.2 Thoughts are needed on which Committee might be appropriate to look at this. We do need to look at innovation more generally. We are lucky as we have a lead project in Studio Ulster, but it doesn't end there. We need to look at prioritising projects that are trying to utilise cutting edge innovation.
- 7.3 Áine Walsh noted that an arts documentary on Paul Muldoon is airing on TG4 on 28th December. A clip and details will be circulated to the Board once we have a confirmed time.
- 7.4 The Chair thanked everyone for their contribution over this last year and wished everyone a Happy Christmas.

8.0 Date of Next Meeting

- 8.1 The date of the next meeting is Tuesday 28th March 2023.

Point	Detail	Actioned by	Update
2.1	Explore options for holding the next meeting in the North West	Marie Shivers	Completed
4.3	Digital Archive Working Group to report to the Board on progress at the next meeting	Francis Jones	Update at meeting
4.6	Look into ISO 27001 accreditation	Anne Dorbie	In progress
4.15	Bring the Diversity Action Plan to the next meeting	Anne Dorbie	Ongoing to take account of 10x requirements
7.2	Appropriate Committee to address Innovation	CEO/Chair	Update at meeting
7.3	Circulate Muldoon clip and information to the Board	Marie Shivers	Completed

Signed: _____



Date: _____

28/3/23