

MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING: 28TH MARCH 2023

10.30am, Tuesday 28th March 2023

Holywell Trust Building, Derry~Londonderry

Present: David Sterling (Chair), Róise Ní Bhaoill, Michael Fanning, Peter Weil, Tom Gray, Carmel Mullan, Fionnuala Deane, Susan Picken, Brenda Romero, Richard Hanna

In attendance: Richard Williams (CEO), Anne Dorbie (Chief Operating Officer), Andrew Reid (Head of Production), Áine Walsh (Head of ILBF), Mary McVey (Marketing Manager), David McConnell (Education and Careers Manager), Francis Jones (Archive Manager), Marie Shivers (PA to CEO)

Apologies: Mark Huffam, Greg Maguire, Laura Higgins (Accountant)

No conflicts of interest were noted.

The Chair welcomed everyone to Derry-Londonderry. The Board agreed that it is good to get out and about and meet in alternative venues to Belfast.

1.0 Minutes of the Board meetings of 13th December 2022

- 1.1 The Board agreed the draft minutes were an accurate reflection of the last meeting and they were signed.
- 1.2 An update on the Digital Archive Working Group's meeting with the BBC NI editorial team on the Rewind Project was provided. It was also noted the Diversity Action Plan would be brought to the next Board meeting. And that the Investment Committee would take an increased interest in Innovation, the manner of which will be reported to the Board at the next meeting.

2.0 Chair's business

- 2.1 The Chair noted concerns around budget uncertainty and the likely reality that we will have to absorb some cuts along with the rest of the public sector, although we are well positioned and regarded in the departments in recognition of what we do for the economy in NI and more broadly.
- 2.2 The Chair's overall impression following his recent US trip was that we punch well above our weight across all sectors. Our impressive track record is clearly recognised by the people we met, although we can't afford to be complacent. The Chair thanked Mary McVey and her marketing team for the homecoming reception following the success of An Irish Goodbye at the Oscars.

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

- 3.1 The CEO summarised his report noting a successful period in terms of public profile with the recent premier of Dungeons and Dragons; Blue Lights airing to five-star reviews; and

numerous awards and nominations including Derry Girls and An Irish Goodbye. He also tipped the arts documentary, Paul Muldoon: Laoithe's Lirici (A Life in Lyrics) for awards.

- 3.2 The CEO reiterated the Chair's concerns about the budget but confirmed that the executive would manage the outcome.
- 3.3 We have had some positive endorsements from the Head of the Civil Service in the context of her work with the US Envoy Joe Kennedy. She has been briefed on the role and launch of Studio Ulster and attended the recent Dungeons & Dragons premiere.
- 3.4 In response to Fionnuala Deane asking about the impact of the restructured tax credits, the CEO stated that the expectation was that they would be largely the same and that there was not a significant uplift although it did look like there was a modest uplift in children's and animation.
- 3.5 The Studio Ulster team and Aura at SXSW did very well in positioning themselves within a UK context. SXSW is vast and we should crystallise how we best utilise it in the future. It is a key venue for the presentation of future technology with a parallel big music and film scene.
- 3.6 Tom Gray noted that he might expect to see more on sustainability within the Board papers. The CEO suggested that this might be a presentational issue as sustainability was at the forefront of both the strategy and activity. It was agreed to pursue the discussion further offline.

KPI Report

- 3.7 The KPI Report was noted, the headline being we are well up on the spend in year 1 of the strategy.

Investment Report

- 3.8 The Investment Report was noted.

4.0 Business Plan 2023-2024

- 4.1 The CEO emphasised that the Business Plan 2023-24 mirrors the 4 year strategy previously developed and agreed by the Board. He further stressed that we would seek to retain the objectives, outputs and KPIs of the 4 year strategy but that this was subject to available budget.
- 4.2 The Business Plan was agreed by the Board.

5.0 Finance, Audit and Governance

Risk Register

- 5.1 Significant changes include the addition of two risks on Belfast Stories and CINE. They don't reflect a change in risk profile, just that they are new significant capital projects which are complex and warrant inclusion on our Risk Register.

5.2 The Audit and Risk Committee went through the Risk Register in detail and noted the above together with the Cyber security risk being reduced which was a reflection of the work carried out recently.

5.3 The Board approved the Risk Register.

Audit and Risk Committee Update

5.4 The internal audit final report on IT and GDPR received an overall 'Satisfactory' result. This will be reviewed again in six months. The 23-24 Internal Audit Plan was presented and reviewed by the Board. The Department also asked us to present the Audit Charter for information purposes.

5.5 An external audit is underway. The timetable has been set with a view to bringing the final accounts to the June Board. This is a positive outcome and the Chair of the ARC thanked Anne and her team for the work undertaken.

DACs

5.6 The DACs were reviewed and approved by the Board.

DfE Assurance Statement

5.7 The DfE Assurance Statement was noted and approved by the Board.

Management Accounts to 31st January 2021

5.8 This is the last week of the financial year with substantial cash still to spend but we are on track and contracting is continuing with a full spend anticipated by the end of March. The additional DfE money received this year to cover the real living wage increase will impact coming into next year. Skills is on target and DfC anticipated for a full spend. Overheads have risen considerably this year but this was absorbed with underspends in other areas. The Chair thanked Carmel Mullan and the Finance team for the considerable amount of work undertaken this year.

Strategic Resources Committee Update

5.9 All issues discussed at the last meeting have been covered. Nothing further to add.

6.0 Other Committee Updates

SECWG

6.1 Declan Keeney is undertaking a study on higher education in the industry. Supporting RTS Student awards this year with the winner of those awards progressing to the media awards in London in June. The Nerve Centre European film programme ended in February with a symposium in the new W5 building with European partners. Into Film's focus is to develop new key resources at KS2 and KS3 stages. Thaddea Graham helped launch the hugely successful Storybuilder for KS3. A number of programmes are underway including developing games resources with Hypixel; Screenworks: production and screen accountancy academies, academies on animation, games and visual effects in Belfast and Derry, and we continue to work with Kippie on the Girls Make Games programme.

ILBF

- 6.2 A number of projects have been funded across a range of genre including topical documentaries on flooding, ethical questions of museum acquisitions and a kayaking trip from Rathlin to Tory Ireland. RTE kicked off Irish Language week with Paper Owl's Ladybird and Bee and Life on the Farm on RTE. The screening of Paul Muldoon's A Life in Lyrics at QFT was very popular. It also screened in San Francisco and is due to screen in London and Cork. The Laughing Boy and a series on Witch Hunts have been nominated for RTS awards as well as 3 nominations at the Celtic Media Festival. A recent seminar was held on establishment of the new children's channel for TG4.

USBF

- 6.3 A Committee meeting held earlier this year was the first time that the Committee had to consider applications in terms of affordability. While the Committee Chair appreciates that all budgets are currently under pressure, there is a sense of frustration that the aspirations of the Committee are dependent on funding. Drama is almost unachievable for the Fund. The Chair anticipates that a substantial number of proposals in the next Spring/Summer round will be unsuccessful. The CEO noted that DCMS has showed some interest in showcasing their involvement with USBF and ILBF.

Investment Committee

- 6.4 Some exciting projects put through the Committee in the last few meetings. Good overnight figures received for Blue Lights which is encouraging. There are challenges around independent film and how affordable it is with 8 films commissioned recently. Ballywalter has received international interest, Bladerunner 2099 will commence filming in NI in May 2023, Hope Street has been commissioned for a third series, Odo Series 2 will return and Hytale has just received funding for the next 3 years.

NIHAWG

- 6.5 Launch of Replay, a UK wide BFI led initiative with nations and regions archives contributing. We are working with QUB on panel discussions, talks, screenings and events around Agreement 25, symposium at Queens marking the Good Friday Agreement. New series with BFI in production around people who played a major role in film or TV both in front of and behind the camera. For the NI element, Robin Walsh, David Barker and Alison Millar have been interviewed and hopefully Emma-Rosa Diaz who are all from very different backgrounds.

Skills/Training

- 6.6 We have been successful in our bid for BFI Cluster funding and are working out the logistics and amount we will receive for the next 3 years.

CEFFWG

- 6.7 David is working on the development of a new evaluation and monitoring framework which will accurately capture the impact and outcomes and tell a much stronger story in terms of the work that exhibition partners do. Belfast Stories is reaching critical phase looking at determining the shape of the future building, what it needs to do and how the screen elements and wider Belfast Stories can be integrated together. There are to be a number of workshops

looking at a programme of requirements for the building itself with results needed for September. A presentation overview will be organised at the next Board meeting.

7.0 Marketing Calendar

- 7.1 A significant number of awards are coming up with BAFTA, IFTA, Torque, RTS NI and Irish Animation nominations. There is to be a Lyra event to coincide with the GFA anniversary which Hilary Clinton will be attending. The London Showcase has been resurrected and this year's focus will be on short films and gaming interactive content. We are hoping that a Puffin Rock movie launch will take place in Derry in June/early July.

8.0 Any Other Business

- 8.1 No other business discussed.

9.0 Date of Next Meeting

- 9.1 The date of the next meeting is Tuesday 20th June 2023.

Point	Detail	Actioned by	Update
1.2	Bring Diversity Action Plan to the next meeting	Anne Dorbie	
1.2	Bring Investment Committee Innovation update to Board	CEO/Peter Weil	
3.6	Further Sustainability discussion	CEO/Tom Gray	
5.7	Presentation on Belfast Stories at next meeting	Susan Picken	

Signed:  _____

Date: 20th June 2023