

MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING: 24th September 2024**11am, Tuesday 24th September 2024****Northern Ireland Screen Boardroom ~ Alfred Street, Belfast**

Present: David Sterling (Chair), Mark Huffam, Fionnuala Deane, Michael Fanning, Peter Weil, Tom Gray, Susan Picken

In attendance: Richard Williams (CEO), Andrew Reid (Chief Content Officer), Áine Walsh (Head of ILBF), Mary McVey (Head of Marketing), Francis Jones (Archive Manager), David McConnell (Education and Careers Manager), Bernard McCloskey (Head of Education), Laura Higgins (Head of Finance), Suzanne Harrison (Head of Funding), Marie Shivers (PA to CEO)

Apologies: Roise Ni Bhaoill, Carmel Mullan

No conflicts of interest were noted.

1.0 Minutes of the Board meeting of 25th June 2024

1.1 The Board were content with the minutes, and they were signed.

1.2 All actions have been addressed.

2.0 Minutes of the Board Away Day of 28th May 2024

2.1 The CEO gave a brief update on Away Day actions noting the majority were underway although most will take a number of months to work through. The briefing for the Secretary of State is yet to be compiled. The competitiveness group met yesterday and will meet again in early December and update at the next meeting. The Board agreed that Away Day Actions should be added as a point on the December agenda.

2.2 The Chair noted an article in Screen Magazine about Lionsgate going into business with an AI company advising that it is an interesting read.

3.0 Chair's business

3.1 The Chair noted a positive conversation with Lord Grade regarding the ongoing battle with Ofcom/Channel 4 as well as discussions with Karen Baxter. The CEO added that we are currently getting more traction with Channel 4 than Ofcom but is hopeful that we are making progress with hopefully some long-term impact.

3.2 Recent news headlines around cuts to City Deal project funding have not affected Studio Ulster. Minister Murphy visited the set of Sweetfoot at Glenarm in August which went very well. It highlighted what we are doing on the sustainability front around HVO and the recycling of unused food, but the real success was the Minister seeing the scale of the production.

3.3 He noted the publishing of the draft Programme for Government document and it is not generally our practice to respond to the PfG consultation.

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

- 4.1 Mentioned CINE, Channel 4 and that a television studio anchored by the BBC at Belfast Stories is still under discussion. The Studio Ulster building is complete and the project moves on to the equipment installation. A first project from Stellify for the BBC and SONY has been secured as Studio Ulster's first customer.
- 4.2 KPIs are generally good for this period excepting Large-scale targets. The Investment Report was noted.
- 4.3 In response to a question around the cessation of CINE funding the CEO confirmed that we need to plug the gap for the next year only as the funding model is likely to change at the beginning of the new strategy in March 2026.

5.0 Finance, Audit and Governance

Risk Register

- 5.1 The Risk Register was discussed in detail at the recent Committee meeting. CINE, Large-scale, challenges in other sectors and the launch of Studio Ulster have already been covered. With CINE in train the biggest risk for us is lack of work in Large-scale which filters down to the studios and Studio Ulster.

Audit and Risk Committee Update

- 5.2 In Carmel Mullan's absence Susan Picken noted a positive meeting where the usual financial and governance matters were reviewed, including the DfE Mid-Year Assurance Statement and review of the Attendance and Timekeeping Policy. There had been discussion at the meeting around a potential Direct Award Contract which had since been resolved. The Attendance and Timekeeping Policy and DfE Mid-Year Assurance Statement were approved by the Board.
- 5.3 Laura Higgins noted two additional disclosures on the final accounts. The Board noted these, approved the Accounts for signature. Laura also noted two outstanding recommendations around sign off and recoupment on the Report to Those Charged With Governance, which we have accepted and will monitor and report back on.

Management Accounts

- 5.4 Laura presented the Management Accounts for approval. Screen Fund is ahead of where we were last year with a further £2.7m due out in October. We are anticipating £11m out by December with everything on track for year-end spend. USBF have £300,000 out already and are on track. ILBF have £1.4m due out by the end of September and have an Investment Committee at the end of the month which is looking more towards next year's cashflow. Skills is approaching a busy recruitment period and Lottery funding of £125,000 was received with a full spend anticipated. This is the final year of Lottery funding but we will reapply. The Board approved the Management Accounts.

Strategic Resources Committee Update

- 5.5 The CEO requested the Board agree to his Observer status on the Studio Ulster Board. As Studio Ulster moves from a build project to an active company, the management/oversight

vehicle has switched from Steering Group to independent Board. The CEO was approached to sit on the Board but the Department rejected this noting it would be inconsistent with the CEO's IDM status. The compromise position therefore is observer status which DfE have agreed to. The Board confirmed its agreement to the CEO having 'observer' status on the Studio Ulster Board.

- 5.6 Suzanne Harrison confirmed the ALB Review Emerging Findings document recommended we continue to be an Arms Length Body. The final report will issue in October. This was a useful procedural exercise and it is good to hear that there are no major concerns.

6.0 Other Committee Updates

Investment Committee

- 6.1 Peter updated on Investment Committee projects from the recent meeting. It was good news that Blue Lights 3 has been recommissioned for a further series and will begin filming in the new year.

Skills/Training

- 6.2 Recent recruitment of additional trainees undertaken and they are doing well. Challenges around CINE have already been discussed. The BFI funded Skills Cluster is in year 2 and is also going well. A recent committee meeting with industry representatives discussed plans for the next 2 years.

NIHAWG

- 6.3 A six-part UTV archive series is contracting this week. The series comes out of UTV collaboration with Northern Ireland Screen, UTV and Brian Henry Martin confirmed as series producer. The aim of the series is to unearth the Northern Ireland that has been forgotten, looking at the alternative history and what it could have been. The first episode is scheduled for broadcast in January on UTV and ITVx. This is a very important project as it is an opportunity to look at a lighter time in NI history and we hope that it will get traction.
- 6.4 The Ban launched successfully at QFT in June and has been picked up by a number of local festivals including IDFA in Amsterdam, and New York. The launch of Beyond 25 last week was well attended and well received.

CEFFWG

- 6.5 We are now entering the busy festival period over the next month but have managed to work together and squeeze lots of films into the screens we have available. The BFI's Fan Con, the first national conference for the film audience network was hugely successful and the Cinemagic festival has just launched and will be running for the next few weeks.

SECWG

- 6.6 Minister Murphy launches the digital skills action plan tomorrow along with CLCs. Recruitment over the summer for their partnership programme has been excellent. BBC Microbit continues however the BBC will drop off formally in January. Discussions are underway in terms of how this can be progressed through CLCs. Into Film will launch a

subject specific MIA Storybuilder in November and will be part of a school summit for ScreenWorks in October.

ILBF

- 6.7 The ILBF team attended the launch in Galway of TG4's autumn schedule. Lots of Northern companies were there with their content forming part of the autumn schedule. The first original Irish language animated series will be launched at the children's festival in Galway in October and also at MipJnr with one episode being screened at Cinemagic. The Investment Committee will meet this week for its audio and digital round. The TV round closes on Friday. A graduation ceremony for current trainees will be held after the Investment Committee. Issues have arisen with trainees securing temporary accommodation while in the programme, but we are providing support where necessary. An investment meeting with BFI will take place in October regarding future funding and we are currently in contact with TGASM around the possibility of an increase to their annual funding. Next year will be 20 years of the Fund so we are working with the marketing team on some form of celebration.

USBF

- 6.8 Funding and cashflow is well ahead of last year's figures. A TV call with the BBC for its autumn commissioning round has just launched. Joe Mahon's 10-part series is currently doing well for UTV with good audience figures and coverage, and Paula McIntyre's US food trip is also receiving good coverage with a solid audience. A number of digital content projects are also underway. Current trainees are progressing well. Funding for next year will be redirected to Stepping Up opportunities with the intention to look at additional trainee places in future years. The 2026 250th anniversary of the declaration is an important anniversary for the Ulster-Scots community to mark and we are currently exploring international as well as local projects which is proving quite challenging. We need to have a plan in place by the end of the year to enable projects to go into production next year.

7.0 Marketing Update

- 7.1 The Chair requested moving the Marketing Calendar further up the agenda to be discussed ahead of the Committee updates.
- 7.2 As well as the usual regular festivals, we have three independent films screening this year at the Newport Beach Festival in California. The annual MIP lunch will take place on 21st October and our Sustainability Showcase on 2nd October at Belfast Harbour studios in conjunction with BBC including panels with PACT and Albert. RTS NI Awards and BMF confirmed for November and the Oscar longlist will be announced in December with Kneecap entered as Ireland's nomination. Education are working around a six month plan for Ministerial engagement on a number of their events.

8.0 Any Other Business

- 8.1 Tom Gray noted that the AICC is well funded. David Crozier is on board as CEO and they are now looking for an advisory board to cover the seven strategic sectors which include the screen industry. It was agreed that a separate discussion was needed to decide on a suitable representative. TG/RW/AR to discuss further.

- 8.2 The Department has launched the Board recruitment exercise. The Chair encouraged Board members to pass on the details to any potential interested parties. The CEO added that he was happy to chat to anyone who was thinking of applying.
- 8.3 Marie Shivers notified the Board that the new Board portal would be up and running within the next couple of weeks and to expect further information via email regarding access to the system.

9.0 Date of Next Meeting

- 9.1 The date of the next meeting is scheduled for 11am on Tuesday 10th December.

Actions

Point	Detail	Actioned by	Update
2.1	Add Away Day Actions update to the December meeting agenda	Marie Shivers	Completed
7.1	Move Marketing Calendar ahead of Committee updates on the agenda	Marie Shivers	Completed
8.1	Separate discussion on representative for the AICC Advisory Board	Tom Gray/ CEO/Andrew Reid	AR first 6 months, Mark Huffam thereafter

Signed: _____



Date: _____

10/12/24