

MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING: 19TH MARCH 2024

10:30am, Tuesday 19th March 2024
Holywell Trust, Derry~Londonderry

- Present:** David Sterling (Chair), Michael Fanning, Peter Weil, Tom Gray, Carmel Mullan, Susan Picken, Richard Hanna, Roise Ni Bhaoill
- In attendance:** Richard Williams (CEO), Áine Walsh (Head of ILBF), Mary McVey (Head of Marketing), David McConnell (Education and Careers Manager), Marie Shivers (PA to CEO)
- Apologies:** Fionnuala Deane, Mark Huffam, Brenda Romero, Andrew Reid (Chief Content Officer), Francis Jones (Archive Manager), Laura Higgins (Head of Finance)

No conflicts of interest were noted.

1.0 Minutes of the Board meeting of 12th December 2023

- 1.1 The Board were content with the minutes, and they were signed.
- 1.2 Two actions remain ongoing, and the CEO will update at the next meeting.

2.0 Chair's business

- 2.1 The Chair noted the new DfE Minister's priorities on the return of the executive which have been assigned to four lead officials to identify actions for the delivery of the new economic vision. Once these are known we can complete the Business Plan for Year 3 of the Strategy.
- 2.2 The Top Structure and Workplace Reviews are complete and the reports circulated for discussion during this meeting.
- 2.3 We are looking forward to meeting both Ministers once they are settled in and will suggest a set visit over the next few weeks. Gordon Lyons has already expressed interest in undertaking a CINE visit.

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

- 3.1 We are working through a very busy year end with funding still to get out, mostly across Screen Fund projects. There has been strong development within the games sector with Italic Pig's Paleo Pines winning a Game Award and Billygoat's Parcel Force hitting the front page of PC Gamer magazine. A considerable challenge lies ahead with the move from 10x to the Minister's new priorities considering all the work already done on the KPIs, Business Plan and Screen Fund processes. We are hoping for an indication of DfE and DfC budget figures soon.

3.2 Nothing further to report on the KPIs other than the re-working due to the new DfE priorities and that we are halfway to our main spend target after 2 of the 4 years despite the Writers & Actors strikes.

3.3 The Board noted the Investment Report.

4.0 ODS2 Final Evaluation Report

4.1 It is good to note that we have hit all our targets with little to carry forward from this report other than a data management recommendation which relates most specifically to skills and trainees.

5.0 Finance, Audit and Governance

Risk Register

5.1 There has been no change to overall risks although a general and significant global slow down in screen production across all sectors has replaced the challenges from the SAG/Afra strikes. Uncertainty around financing remains a risk. Tom Gray asked questions regarding risk associated with a change of UK government, the impact of AI and succession planning. These were discussed with specific reference to Queen's University undertaking a research project on AI across the screen industries and the launch of the Artificial Intelligence Collaboration Centre at the end of the month.

5.2 The Board approved the Risk Register.

DfE Year End Assurance Statement

5.3 The Year End Assurance Statement is complete with two items still in progress, both of which are being addressed. Audit documents are in order and meetings arranged for drawing up the Audit Plan for 2024/25.

5.4 The Board approved the Assurance Statement.

Management Accounts

5.5 Carmel Mullan noted the key highlights with £22m spend to February 24 with a further £6m to go out in March of which £3m was allocated at Investment Committee for a Large-Scale project. There will be a surplus of £628,000 due to timings of expenditure and cash receipts last year and at the beginning of this year. Pay negotiations are ongoing with a meeting this week to see if pay award is accepted. An accrual has been drawn up in anticipation of the award being agreed. Screen Fund received £1.475m return of funds back in February from Bulero, all is on track for a full spend by year end. Increased recoupment to £800,000 was agreed and anything over £800,000 will be returned to DfE. The recoupment balance is currently £883k. Skills programmes and all DfC expenditure are on track. No confirmation yet for next year on the £0.5m DfC shortfall picked up by DfE this year. 80% paid out for ILBF and 90% for USBF. All other funds are on track. As Skills Cluster is in its first year programme, there may be a small underspend, but this is what we were anticipating and funders content with underspend.

Strategic Resources Committee Update

- 5.6 Positive reports received from the Workplace and Top Structure reviews. 72% of engagement from staff was recorded and a number of issues have already been addressed. The Committee agreed that the CEO would take forward implementation of other recommendations. The Top Structure review recommended the appointment of a COO later in the year but a grading review of top level staff will be carried out first. While we could benefit from increased capacity we need to have the right staff structure. The Chair will forward to the Department both reports along with a request seeking their agreement for a grading review.
- 5.7 In response to a finding in the Workplace questionnaire, the Board agreed to facilitate better understanding of the Board's role within the overall organisational structure. The CEO noted that Board members were very visible through the committee structure but that there were some areas of activity that were not touched on by committees, most particularly skills. This should be rectified when the Board returns to its full complement.
- 5.8 The Board was content to adopt the recommendations in the workplace review and ask CEO to take them forward. The Chair will also contact the Department to request a grading review.

6.0 Other Committee Updates

USBF

- 6.1 Richard Hanna highlighted an additional round of Declaration of Independence anniversary projects. Very positive feedback received on the recent Andrew Trimble documentary.

Investment Committee

- 6.2 Peter reported on the commitments from the Investment Committee including Sweetfoot's recent award of £3m and noted two NI projects included in the Radio Times 65 top TV shows – Breathtaking and Blue Lights. Peter highlighted Kneecap's recent success at Sundance Film Festival, the commissioning of the fourth series of Hope Street, new Children's TV series Tim Tooth and the second series of The Finish Line.

NIHAWG

- 6.3 Peter noted the UTV Partnership deal has been extended.

Skills/Training

- 6.4 David McConnell updated on the BFI Skills Cluster programme. In terms of activity 21 programmes have been delivered, 6 across pathways, 10 around CPD for existing crew and 5 on innovative technology. Just under 600 people are engaged on those 3 strands.

CEFFWG

- 6.5 Susan noted that the status of funding was the current main issue. Nerve Centre are planning for the Realise festival in April, Cinemagic's On the Pulse is happening currently, Belfast Film Festival are in the planning stage for this year's Docs Ireland and are working on a film project called The Hearth with Mark Cousins and Alison Millar which will premiere at the festival then go on to theatrical release afterwards.

SECWG

- 6.6 Richard Hanna was recently appointed as Chair of the SECWG. September is a busy period for CLCs with a number of development partnerships under way including a commercial partnership with Warner Bros with a focus on Storybuilder. Richard had the pleasure of chairing his first meeting and was struck by how effective the education outreach is. There is such a range of high-quality delivery partners and Richard looks forward to working with David and the partners.

ILBF

- 6.7 Roise updated the Board on recently aired ILBF programmes. She and Áine attended a Comex Committee meeting around the European Charter for Minority Languages and await the report. The CEO will raise the point of the government considering a 4-year cycle of funding for the language funds at the No.10 roundtable this week.

7.0 Draft Business Plan

- 7.1 The Business Plan will be reviewed in light of the strategic change from 10x to the Minister's economic priorities. While the practical activity is unlikely to substantially change we should wait until June to sign off a final Business Plan once we receive this strategic context and budgets from both departments. The Chair suggested that we might aim to sign off the Business Plan at the Away Day early in May.

8.0 Board Away Day Agenda

- 8.1 CEO noted the BBC's network figures which confirm BBC compliance with its population tacked target of 3%. He also noted the C4 relicensing process and the submission to OFCOM pressing for a population-based quota.
- 8.2 Want to capture the Board's appetite for what should be addressed, ie: innovation (focussing on AI), organisation structure, succession planning, Belfast Stories, BBC Partnership, future of archive, ILBF sectoral review, Ministerial priorities – regional balance.
- 8.3 It would be good to get the Minister to open the away day.
- 8.4 Board members to feed into Richard any areas they would like included on the agenda.

9.0 Marketing Update

- 9.1 Mary highlighted the Blue Lights premiere invitations, our annual London Showcase in London in April where we showcase short films, interactive and New Talent Focus films, and the forthcoming BFC high end TV familiarisation trip from the US.

10.0 Any Other Business

10. No other business was discussed.

11.0 Date of Next Meeting

9.1 The date of the next meeting is Tuesday 25th June 2024.

Actions

Point	Detail	Actioned by	Update
2.3 & 8.3	Explore options for set visits for DfE and DfC Ministers & DfE Minister for Away Day	RW/AR	Studio Ulster visited completed, Sweetfoot in train
5.6	Forward both review documents and seek agreement from DfE for a grading review	Chair	Completed
5.8	Take forward recommendations from workplace review	CEO	Ongoing
6.7	Raise minority language funding at No.10 roundtable	CEO	Completed
8.4	Feed in agenda suggestions for Board Away day to CEO	All	Completed

Signed:  _____

Date: 25th June 2024