

**Tha Board O Ulster-Scotch
104th Board Meeting
12 February 2011, 11.30am
Ulster-Scots Agency Board Room, Belfast**

Present:	Mr Tom Scott (Chair)
	Mrs Angela Graham (Vice-Chair)
	Mrs Hilary Singleton
	Dr Ian Adamson
	Mr Michael McLoone
	Mr William Leathem (joined meeting 12noon)
	Mr Tony Crooks
	Mrs Jacqui Reed
In attendance:	Miss Hazel Campbell (Interim Chief Executive Officer [ICEO])
	Mr Jim Millar (Director of Education and Language)
	Mr Michael McCullough (Director of Corporate Services)
	Mrs Catherine Martin
Recording Secretary:	Ms Lyndsey Hanna

1. Welcome from the Chairperson

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed members to the 104th meeting of the Board, which was his first meeting as the Chair.
- 1.2 The Chair gave a brief overview of his other interests and positions. He highlighted that until 2005 he had been a Northern Ireland senior civil servant with Department for Employment and Learning with responsibility for skills, management development and youth training policy.

In November 2005 he became Chair of the Greater Shankill Partnership Board in Belfast leading the partnership on neighbourhood regeneration strategy. He is also a board member of Ormeau Enterprise Ltd, a local enterprise agency, a board member of Intertrade Ireland and is involved with several private and public sector bodies. Lastly the Chair indicated that he is also involved in youth issues through Scouting, Belfast Activity Centre and the Gerry Rogan Initiative Trust.

1.3 The Chair informed the Board that since being appointed he had met with Minister McCausland and he had received positive feedback on the Agency's 2011 Business Plan from the Minister.

1.4 He advised the Board that he was looking forward to the challenge of being Chair of the Agency and is coming into his new position with an open mind. He indicated that he sees the Agency with a lot of potential for modernising.

2. Apologies

2.1 There were no apologies.

3. Minutes of Last Meeting

3.1 Minutes of the meeting of the Board on 16 December 2010 were agreed with one minor amendment. In para 5.3 the word 'persons' to be changed to 'Board members'.

3.2 ***Proposed and Agreed:*** *that the minute be accepted.*

4. Matters Arising

4.1 Miss Campbell informed the Board that all matters arising will be dealt with in the CEO report.

5. Interim Chief Executive Officer's Report

5.1 Miss Campbell provided the Board with feedback she had received from the producers, Evergreen Media Limited, on the programme on the plantation aired on UTV on 15 December 2010 at 11pm. The programme attracted audiences in the range of 118,000 – 128,000 which was viewed as a good result for the time of the

transmission. DVD copies of the programme were available to Board members if they missed the programme or wished to see it again. These would be used as an educational resource.

5.2 Miss Campbell informed the Board that the first meeting of the Ulster-Scots Forum took place on 3 February 2011, attended by Iain Crozier, Iain Carlisle and Matthew Warwick from the Ulster-Scots Community Network and by Tom Scott, Hilary Singleton and the Agency's Executive team.

5.3 Miss Campbell gave an update on the Annual Reports & Accounts. A date for the next Language Body meeting to sign off the consolidated accounts for 2007 is to be confirmed. Board members were asked to provisionally hold 14 April for this meeting to take place in Dublin.

5.4 Miss Campbell advised the Board that the Agency has issued 170 letters of offer to date for music tuition in 2011, valued at £255,224 and 34 letters of offer for dance tuition valued at £76,076. Eight applications have been rejected primarily because the applications were incomplete. Two groups have also withdrawn their applications. The Board members were also advised that the Agency is currently behind in tuition claims for 2010 due to the processing of 2011 tuition awards. Miss Campbell indicated that the delay in processing 2010 claims had generated criticism from some groups. She said that she was doing what she could to address the bottleneck in the workload of the grants team.

5.5 The Business cases for the grant offers agreed by the Board at its last meeting for the Ulster-Scots Community Network, the Ulster-Scots Language Society and the Ullans Speakers Association have been submitted to the two Sponsor Departments for approval.

5.6 Miss Campbell drew the Board's attention to the further correspondence she had received from Mr Sammy Wilson MP MLA on behalf of the Cairncastle Ulster-Scots group. She advised that the Agency cannot pay on the basis that the Agency's offer

of financial assistance was turned down, there is no contract in place and no claims have been received. Expenditure in these circumstances would be deemed irregular.

5.7 Miss Campbell informed the Board that PWC consultants have been appointed to take forward the competition for the appointment of a new Chief Executive. A Steering Group has been set up to oversee the project comprising our Chairman, Hilary Singleton, Tony Crooks and Arthur Scott from DCAL.

5.8 **Mr Leathem joined the meeting at this point.**

5.9 Miss Campbell reported on meetings with Community Change Northern Ireland and the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Finance Administration (CIPFA) to discuss the provision of training for core funded groups, community workers and other grant applicants in the areas of governance and managing public money. Proposals are being developed for the Agency's consideration which will be tailored to meet the needs of each group.

5.10 Miss Campbell referred to correspondence from both Sponsor Departments detailing the Agency's indicative budgets for the period 2011-2013 which are subject to approval of Finance Ministers and NSMC. It indicated a cut of 9% in 2011 and at least 3% per annum thereafter. The Agency has been asked to resubmit the 2011 Business Plan and draft 2011-2013 Corporate Plans in line with the indicative figures.

5.11 Miss Campbell advised that the Department of Culture Arts and Leisure have placed an advertisement in the press seeking a chair and 4 members for the Ulster-Scots Academy Ministerial Advisory Group. The Chair stated that he would like to see Agency representation on the group and this was to be raised with the Minister.

5.12 The Executive had attended a meeting with representatives from the National Trust to discuss the new Causeway Visitors Centre. Opportunities for incorporating Ulster-Scots heritage in the exhibitions were discussed and there will be follow up meetings to discuss this further.

ACTION: Mr Millar.

- 5.13 Miss Campbell will be meeting with Dr McGinley from Ilex to discuss possible Ulster-Scots input to the Londonderry City of Culture 2013 plans. A meeting was also arranged with representatives of the First Derry Presbyterian Church, regarding funding of the Interpretative Centre. Mrs Reed informed the Board that the First Derry Presbyterian Church are currently submitting a Peace III application for funding jointly with Monreagh and it may be useful to see this before the Agency agree to any proposal.

ACTION: Miss Campbell.

- 5.14 Miss Campbell advised that today was the last day for receipt of applications for the Community Workers Scheme. She invited volunteers from the Board to sit on the panel to assess the applications. Mrs Reed nominated herself and Dr Adamson proposed this. The Board will be advised of the Panel's decisions, and any issues will be referred back to the Board for consideration.

ACTION: Mr Millar.

- 5.15 In relation to the quality assurance of publications in the Ulster-Scots language, Miss Campbell wrote to the Ulster-Scots Language Society, the Ulster-Scots Community Network and the Ullans Speakers Association to convene a meeting to discuss publications planned for 2011 to ensure there is no duplication and also to discuss the possibility of setting up an editorial committee. Nominations have been received from 2 of the groups and an exploratory meeting will be set up.

- 5.16 Mr Leathem wished to record in the minutes recognition for the work carried out by John Hunter, Interim Chair. The Board were grateful for his guidance during 2010. The Board agreed to write formally to Mr Hunter to thank him for his contribution to the work of the Board.

ACTION: Miss Campbell.

6. Music and Dance Tuition within Communities – Consultation Paper

6.1 Mr Millar explained the background to the consultation with stakeholders on options for modifying how the Agency supports the delivery of music and dance tuition within communities.

6.2 The Agency had invited a number of umbrella groups to discuss possible options prior to proceeding to public consultation which commenced on 15th October 2010. Some twenty-seven groups responded to the consultation, including local authorities, umbrella bodies and organisations representing groups identified under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and service users.

6.3 Mr Millar highlighted to the Board areas where there appeared to be general consensus about possible modifications to the tuition programme as follows:

- There was acceptance across the sector that applications should be determined on merit basis against objective criteria within a transparent process. The system and budget should provide for newly established groups while managing demands on the various funding programmes.
- New application and reporting requirements supported by training and detailed guidance.
- Proposed changes to streamline and simplify payment processes were almost universally welcomed.
- There is an appetite for the extension of the scheme to include more instruments however guidance on Ulster Scots repertoire is essential.
- The inclusion of an Ulster Scots history and culture lesson within the programme with a focus on the development of particular Ulster-Scots instruments and musical traditions.
- Enhanced systems to monitor progress including a performance element with significant support for a mechanism to recognise and reward excellence suggestions

included an Agency sponsored performance/ competition and an Agency “proficiency test”.

- The provision of “master-classes” and skills development for tutors and judges. There was significant demand for networking opportunities. There were also requests for a directory of participating groups and for a register of tutors.
- Support for actions that increase quality assurance through use of tutors with appropriate accreditation and through the submission of programmes of work with associated lesson plans.

6.4 Miss Campbell indicated that these emerging views were discussed at the meeting of the Forum and the USCN has agreed to provide further comments on the proposals. These had been received and were tabled at the meeting. Mrs Reed expressed concerns that the views of the USCN would not be representative of groups in her area.

6.5 Mrs Singleton suggested that the Agency approach the USCN and ask them for a breakdown of individual responses of those who they were representing as this would be more valuable to the consultation process.

6.6 Mr Leathem said that the issue of excluding band practice needed to be addressed.

6.7 The Board discussed the challenges attached to improving repertoire and possibly accreditation which is not currently available for all genres.

6.8 Mr Millar referred to the work of the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) which was about capturing learning outcomes, and he suggested the submission of lesson plans as a possible way forward.

6.9 Mr Crooks said he would favour a merit approach and fewer awards with clear outcomes, while at the same time being able to support new groups. Mr McLoone agreed with the concept of lessons leading to a curriculum of learning within communities.

6.10 The Chair suggested that there may be merit in a two strand approach – introducing as many people as possible to the music through basic tuition, and through mechanisms to drive up standards and excellence. He also suggested that the Agency needs to modernise its

concept of musical tuition by widening the criteria to new instruments which can play Ulster-Scots tunes. Mrs Singleton said she would like to see established groups show leadership by helping other groups move forward.

- 6.11 In concluding the discussion, the Chair asked the Executive to work up proposals for a new scheme, taking account of the members views.

ACTION: *Mr Millar.*

7. Review of the Financial Assistance Scheme

- 7.1 Miss Campbell informed the Board that Minister McCausland has requested a fundamental review of the Agency's Financial Assistance Scheme to address issues such as higher quality/higher impact authentic Ulster-Scots projects, events and festivals, that the procedures are transparent, easily understandable and accessible by the community and that the scheme facilitates and encourages the development of east west links.
- 7.2 Mrs Singleton was concerned that the timescale for the turnaround of the review of the scheme was just 4 weeks. Other members were concerned that the emphasis on fewer higher quality projects would exclude smaller groups which were possibly capable of growing and achieving a higher impact through time.
- 7.3 Miss Campbell said that although the timescale was challenging, the FAS needs re-written urgently in any case as the Agency is not currently implementing all the requirements as stated on assessment procedures.
- 7.4 The Chair said that the Scheme should be modernised and should be less prescriptive, and more enabling. Detailed assessment processes should be contained in supplementary guidance which can be updated as necessary.

7.5 Mrs Reed queried the geographical coverage and asked if projects in other parts of Ireland, outside Ulster, would be eligible. Miss Campbell referred to the Agency's statutory remit which refers to the 'island of Ireland'.

ACTION: *It was agreed that Miss Campbell would draft an update of the FAS for the next meeting identifying deficiencies and omissions in the current scheme.*

8 Monreagh Funding Application

8.1 Mrs Reed left the meeting at this point.

8.2 Miss Campbell informed the Board that to date the Agency has not provided any of its own funds for the Monreagh project. In 2007 an agreement was reached whereby the Department of Community Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs routed funding through the Agency for 2 projects as follows:

- To the Institute of Ulster-Scots Studies (IUSS) for the Monreagh project – €118,922 for 3 years commencing December 07
- To the Monreagh Manse Committee to refit and refurbish the Manse for the Monreagh project – €77,078 for 3 years commencing December 07

8.3 DCEGA has now advised the Agency that no further additional funds would be made available and therefore a partnership funding agreement with the Southern Department is no longer an option. Board members expressed their concerns that the Agency has been left in this position.

8.4 The Chair indicated that the review of the Financial Assistance Scheme would have to consider the policy for core-funded groups and hence he recommended an interim award for 1 year without prejudice to future funding.

8.5 Miss Campbell advised that there has been a significant increase in the budgets submitted by Monreagh since November 2009, particularly with regard to employee costs. Initially funding was sought for 2 posts, and this has now increased to 4 posts. Board members re-

affirmed their view that the Centre Manager post was critical to the success of the organisation.

8.6 After further discussion the Board agreed in principle to put in place interim funding of €90k, to be allocated as follows:

- Project Manager €35,000
- Support staff €20,000
- Administration/programme costs €35,000

8.7 It was also agreed that for interim funding to proceed, all posts should be subject to open competition with a list of essential and desirable criteria, that strict evaluation and monitoring procedures should be put in place, and any governance issues had to be addressed.

8.8 Miss Campbell advised that a business case for the funding would have to be referred to the two Sponsor Departments for approval.

ACTION: Miss Campbell.

8.9 **The Board adjourned for lunch and Mrs Reed rejoined the meeting.**

9 Revised 2011 Business Plan

9.1 Miss Campbell informed the Board that revisions have been made to the Agency's 2011 Business Plan following receipt of comments from the Sponsor Departments and taking into account the new indicative budgets. She highlighted the main changes in the document. These changes were accepted and noted by the Board.

9.2 Mrs Reed asked for clarification on the key target under 4.5 of the Business Plan. Mr Millar advised Mrs Reed that the Agency was not in a position to proceed with strategic work on education until there was further clarification from DCAL on the remit of the Ulster-Scots Academy.

- 9.3 Mrs Singleton advised the Board that she noted a news story in the national press regarding new GCSE subjects in schools which will compare different cultures. She suggested that Mr Millar explore this with CCEA.

ACTION: Mr Millar to follow up and provide feedback at next meeting.

- 9.4 The Chair congratulated the Executive team on the work on the 2011 Business Plan.

10 Policies

- 10.1 Mrs Martin introduced the policy documents presented for approval. The Freedom of Information Policy and Procedures was agreed without amendment.
- 10.2 Mrs Singleton recommended a number of changes to both the Appeals Policy and the Discipline and Grievance Procedures. The Board were in agreement to the amendments.

11/12 Marketing Report and Marketing and Communications Activity Plan

- 11.1 Both papers were noted and approved.

13/14 Draft 2011 Budget and Finance report

- 13.1 Mr McCullough presented the outturn report for 2010, the proposed budget allocation for 2011 and the expenditure to date. He explained that the 2010 under spend was due to some community groups not claiming grants under the financial assistance scheme before the end of 2010. This would create some pressure on the 2011 cash budget.

- 13.2 Mr McCullough said that the low spend in January 2011 was due to the grants team being unable to process the outstanding tuition claims for 2010 due to the workload associated with processing grants for 2011.

15 Staff Contracts

- 15.1 Mr McCullough informed the Board that the Agency has engaged BDO consultants on behalf of the North South Language Body to produce a generic set of employment contracts for staff in the Agency. The current position sees staff employed by the Agency (and Foras) on heads of terms but without contracts.
- 15.2 Mr Crooks advised members that this is a priority 1 issue raised by the Audit Office on the Agency's 2006 accounts.
- 15.3 The Board members were asked to forward any comments on this paper to Miss Campbell for discussion with Foras na Gaeilge, in advance of the next meeting of the Language Body.

ACTION: Board Members.

16 Armagh GAA

- 16.1 Mr Millar tabled this paper at the meeting. In December 2010 Armagh GAA contacted the Agency seeking to explore aspects of the Ulster-Scots culture. The Armagh GAA 2008-2012 Strategic Plan for development states that that they wish to *'Form links with the Ulster-Scots Agency with the view to organising joint cultural events and activities'*.
- 16.2 The Board agreed in principle to providing financial support of around £1,000 to Ulster-Scots performers to participate in the cultural showcase.

ACTION: Mr Millar.

17. Joint Working with East Ayrshire Council

- 17.1 Mrs Singleton left the meeting at this point.
- 17.2 Mr Millar tabled this paper at the meeting. He advised the Board that East Ayrshire Council have commissioned Northern Ireland composer Kevin O’Connell to look at the similarities and differences between Scottish and Irish music through a partnership project. East Ayrshire Council wished to work jointly with an Ulster-Scots fiddle orchestra, and Mid-Armagh Community Network fiddle orchestra was identified as a suitable partner.
- 17.3 The Board supported the educational benefits of the project and agreed in principle that the Agency should fund the travel costs of the school children from Ulster participating on the project.

18 AOB

18.1 Partisan Productions

- 18.1.1 Mr Millar explained that this group had previously received an offer of financial assistance from the Agency of £20,000 as part of a £71,000 project to present public performances of James Hogg’s play, ‘The Confessions of a justified Sinner.’ A grant of £27,300 had also been awarded to the group by the ACNI to jointly fund this project. Delivery had been planned for the period September 2010 to March 2011. In the event, it proved difficult for the group to secure the necessary spread of venues and inclusion in winter programmes. The programme did not run during this period.
- 18.1.4 On February 4th the group contacted the Agency indicating that a revised schedule of tour dates and locations was now established and that they were requesting that the grant of £20,000 be carried over into this period. They further indicated that the original grant from ACNI of £27,300 had been confirmed for this period. The revised total budget for this project is now £59,540, some £10,000 less than that previously indicated in the original business plan.

18.1.5 Mr Millar recommended an amended offer of £10,000 from the Agency in recognition of the reduced costs of the project.

18.1.6 This was approved by the Board.

18.2 Agency publication “A Word of Ulster Scots” by Liam Logan.

Dr Adamson queried why there was a delay in circulating the Agency’s most recent publication “A Word of Ulster Scots” by Liam Logan and he sought members support for a launch of the book. Some members had no knowledge of the book as the issue was not on the Agenda. The Chair agreed to address the matter.

Action: *Mr Scott*

18.3 Other papers circulated for Board members information were:

- Final outturn against the 2010 Business Plan targets;
- Contingency arrangements in event of any Flu Pandemic.

18.4 Mrs Reed asked if the Board will have any representation at the Milwaukee Irish Fest 2011. Mr McCullough said that he was developing a partnership project with others including Tourism Ireland and he would present the details at the next Board meeting.

ACTION: *Mr McCullough.*

18.5 Mr McLoone proposed that a schedule of meetings for the year be put in place. The Chair will look at this for the next meeting.

18.6 Miss Campbell informed the Board that Mrs Martin would be returning to DCAL at the end of next week and her time with the Agency has come to an end.

19 Date of Next Meeting

19.1 It is proposed to hold the next Board meeting on 24 March 2011 at the Agency offices.
Members will be advised if the Audit committee is to meet on the same date.

Signed:

Dated: