

THA BOORD o ULSTÈR-SCOTCH

ULSTER-SCOTS AGENCY

CORPORATE PLAN

2008 – 2010

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Corporate Plan establishes the Agency's principal objectives over the next three years and how these objectives will be measured. The Agency will also produce annual Business Plans which will provide greater detail of the actions to be taken each year.

In preparation of the Corporate Plan the Agency consulted widely with the community in a series of Public Meetings and their views have helped inform this plan.

During the period of this plan the Agency aims to continue to promote and develop Ulster Scots, to increase recognition of the value of Ulster Scots language and culture and we hope to see it take its rightful place at the centre of society.

To help achieve this we have developed specific themes which reflect our focus on delivery.

The Ulster Scots Agency has at its core a promotional remit. Promotion comes in many forms and it is accepted that every aspect of the Agency's work involves promotion whether it be through publications, grant assisted activity or delivering a service to other organisations. However, central to all of this is a marketing and information strategy that involves the optimum use of resources to inform and educate people about Ulster Scots both in general terms and on more specific issues.

The Agency recognises the need to protect and develop our cultural capital and is extremely conscious of the importance of cultural activity to individuals and to a healthy society. The Ulster Scots community is at a stage of development

requiring careful nurture and a coherent strategy if the community is to be able to achieve its potential.

We will continue to work with community organisations to ensure that they fulfil their potential in linguistic activity, music, dance, literature, drama and the visual arts, thus helping people to unlock their creativity.

If the Agency is to succeed in encouraging as many people as possible to engage in Ulster Scots activities either as participants or audience/spectators, it will be essential to establish partnerships with key organisations.

The Agency considers itself to be a service provider. To ensure that we offer a first class service to our stakeholders and partners we will strive to ensure that our processes and procedures operate effectively and efficiently.

2. THE ORGANISATION

The North/South Language Body was set up as one of the North/South bodies under the Belfast Agreement. This body comprises two agencies, Tha Boord o Ulstèr-Scotch (The Ulster-Scots Agency) and Foras na Gaeilge. Each of these agencies has a separate Board; the two Boards together constitute the Board of the North/ South Language Body. The Chairpersons of the Agencies are the Joint Chairs of the North/South Language Body – otherwise known as Tha Boord o Leid in Ulster-Scots and An Foras Teanga in Irish.

The Body has a Board of 24 members appointed by the North/South Ministerial Council (NSMC). Of those members-

16 are drawn from among persons appearing to NSMC to have an interest in, or experience of, matters relating to the functions of the Body in relation to Irish language; and

8 are drawn from among persons appearing to NSMC to have an interest in, or experience of, matters relating to the functions of the Body in relation to Ullans and Ulster-Scots cultural issues.

The Board of the Ulster Scots Agency is responsible for ensuring that the statutory functions and the strategic plans of the Agency are implemented in an effective and efficient manner. Accordingly, the Board:

- Provides advice to Ministers and the North/South Ministerial Council on major issues of policy and strategy;
- Acts as a channel of communication with the Agency's social partners, to ensure the continued relevance of its strategies and policies;

- Considers and endorses the Agency's Corporate Plan and the Annual Business Plan before submission to the sponsoring Departments and the North/South Ministerial Council;
- Is responsible to the Ministers through the sponsoring Departments for the achievement of the Agency's targets;
- Endeavours to ensure that adequate resources are made available to fulfil the Board's duties and responsibilities.

The legislative remit of the Ulster-Scots Agency is the "promotion of greater awareness and use of Ullans and of Ulster-Scots cultural issues, both within Northern Ireland and throughout the island"

The Agency is responsible to the North/South Ministerial Council, and in particular to the two Ministers, in the Northern Ireland Assembly and Dáil Éireann whose remits include language and culture. During the period of suspension of the Northern Ireland Assembly, the Agency is responsible to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

The Agency has its main office in Belfast with a regional office in Raphoe, Co. Donegal.

In carrying out its functions in relation to Ulster-Scots language and cultural issues the Body may -

- a) Provide advice for both administrations, public bodies and other groups in the private and voluntary sectors;
- b) Undertake research and promotional campaigns; and
- c) Support projects and grant-aid bodies and groups.

3. OVERVIEW OF WORK TO DATE

The Ulster-Scots Agency programme of work outlined in past Corporate and Business Plans has been based on four strategic themes namely:

- Linguistic Development
- Culture
- Education
- Public Awareness and Understanding of Ulster-Scots

The Linguistic aspect of our work has over a number of years been resourced through grants to the Ulster Scots Language Society. However with the appointment of a Director of Language towards the end of 2005 the Agency was able to become more proactive. In 2006 the Agency supported the first ever Ulster Scots summer schools. These were essentially pilot projects which proved most successful and form a significant part of our plans for the future. Additionally we commenced work on publishing Ulster Scots writers with the first book featuring the works of the early 19th century poet Sarah Leech from Donegal, and we propose to continue this very important publishing effort.

The Agency through its grant aid and sponsorship schemes continues to support groups and organisations in the development of Ulster-Scots culture. Over the last few years the major areas of growth have been in dance and musical tuition. We have been encouraged by the variety of projects that groups are initiating and becoming involved with and we hope to increase this level of activity even further. Again over the last year we have been more proactive, in partnership with the community, in organising Agency led events.

As a result of funding from the Irish Youth Foundation we employed a Youth Development Officer on secondment for one year in 2006 to work with young people in inner city areas; this has been an important initiative for the Agency which must be further developed.

Capacity building **is** of primary importance, and must be addressed. The Agency is actively engaged with the community to establish effective and meaningful ways to assist the community to fulfil its potential.

The Agency has produced a range of information leaflets and other publications, and hosts a number of websites. We are very aware of the importance of communication and we will build on this success over the next three years.

The Agency has put in place a public relations strategy which continually strives to ensure that the public are informed of Ulster-Scots issues. It is realistic, however to acknowledge that much work remains to be done. The Agency has made rapid progress over the last few years to meet the various targets required under Corporate Governance and we are determined to continue to do so.

In preparation of the Corporate Plan the Agency consulted widely with the community in a series of Public Meetings and their views have helped inform this plan.

During the period of this plan the Agency aims to continue to promote and develop Ulster Scots, to increase recognition of the value of Ulster Scots language and culture and we hope to see it take its rightful place at the centre of society.

To help achieve this we have developed specific themes which reflect our focus on delivery.

4. MARKETING

The Ulster Scots Agency has at its core a promotional remit. Promotion comes in many forms and it is accepted that every aspect of the Agency's work involves promotion whether it be through publications, grant assisted activity or delivering a service to other organisations. However, central to all of this is a marketing and information strategy that involves the optimum use of resources to inform and educate people about Ulster Scots both in general terms and on more specific issues.

The Agency will therefore:

- Engage in advertising campaigns through a variety of media to promote general awareness;
- Organise public events to showcase Ulster Scots language and /or culture
- Maximise the potential of Agency websites and the use of information technology;
- Publish information leaflets, CDs DVDS etc;
- Publish a regular newspaper and contribute articles to other publications.
- Maintain a good working relationship with the media;
- Issue press releases and have personnel available for interviews as necessary;
- Conduct briefing meetings for opinion formers in the media and for key figures in government and public administration;
- Provide advice and guidance to Broadcasters on issues relating to Ulster Scots;
- Organise Ulster Scots Community Radio Stations;
- Support Ulster Scots programming on TV and Radio;
- Broadcast programmes via the Agency website;
- Use sporting and other events to showcase Ulster Scots.

MARKETING PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:

The success of the objective of improving public understanding will be evaluated by a public survey of opinion each year and additionally:

- The Agency will publish a minimum of 8 editions of the Ulster Scot newspaper each year;
- Produce a CD or DVD on an annual basis;
- Conduct a major marketing campaign each year to highlight a specific element of Ulster Scot language, culture or heritage;
- Organise two showcase events each year;
- Participate at two major sporting or other general events by showcasing Ulster Scots;
- Produce 6 television programmes to be broadcast via the Agency website.

5. SERVING THE COMMUNITY

The Agency recognises the need to protect and develop our cultural capital and is extremely conscious of the importance of cultural activity to individuals and to a healthy society. The Ulster Scots community is at a stage of development requiring careful nurture and a coherent strategy if the community is to be able to achieve its potential.

The Agency will continue to work with community organisations to ensure that they fulfil their potential in linguistic activity, music, dance, literature, drama and the visual arts, thus helping people to unlock their creativity.

The development of active participation by community groups, organisations and individuals in linguistic and cultural activity will be a major feature of the Agency's work over the period of this plan.

To ensure this the Agency will work with and provide financial assistance through grant aid or sponsorship to a wide variety of Ulster Scots groups, community organisations and individuals in line with our Financial Assistance Scheme.

We will also provide sustained training opportunities which will deliver programmes to improve community infrastructure and build capacity within the Ulster Scots community.

In addition to the financial support provided to community groups, organisations and individuals provided directly by the Agency we will work with these groups to assist them in drawing down funding for Ulster Scots activities from Government Departments and other funding bodies.

We will focus inter alia on the following:

- Exploration of the many historical and contemporary links between Scotland and Ireland in language, history and culture;
- Exploration of the many historical and contemporary links with North America and other areas where the influence of Ulster Scots migrants has made an impact;
- The growth and development of musical tuition (including dance), both in the community and through the education system;
- Support for language projects;
- The provision of Ulster Scots literature in the community, libraries and the education system;
- Encouragement and promotion of opportunities for people to engage in a range of activities such as storytelling, drama and re-enactment;
- Support for research into Ulster Scots history, heritage and identity both at academic and community level. This will include research into the positive impact that Ulster Scots and the Ulster Scots Diaspora made on the world, as well as acknowledging the negative impact of emigration on those who stayed in Ulster;
- The provision of opportunities for performers to excel in their chosen field and to showcase the available talent in appropriate arenas and venues;
- The development and expansion of “Summer Schools” and “After Schools Clubs”;
- The provision of training and support to increase the capacity and skills of voluntary groups and organisations;
- Encouragement for more young people to engage in Ulster Scots activity;
- The establishment and maintenance of a database of performers etc that can be provided to groups.

SERVING THE COMMUNITY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:

- 10% growth in the numbers engaged in tuition in Ulster Scots activities over the period of the plan;
- An Agency led festival together with a minimum of five community festivals to be held each year;
- A minimum of thirty summer schools to be held each year;
- A major showcase event to be held in different parts of the island of Ireland each year;
- 20% increase in the number of young people engaged in Ulster Scots activity over the period of the plan;
- Two conferences and/or seminars to be held each year to address confidence and capacity building measures in the Ulster Scots Community;
- The publication or reprint of two major pieces of Ulster Scots literature each year;
- The publication of a database of performers that is made available to Ulster Scots groups who are organising events;
- Increase the level of approval of the grant assistance process in meeting the needs of the community.

6. WORKING WITH OTHERS

If the Agency is to succeed in encouraging as many people as possible to engage in Ulster Scots activities either as participants or audience/spectators, it will be essential to establish partnerships with key organisations.

The Agency recognises that it alone cannot meet the needs of the Ulster Scots community and is therefore committed to building relationships with Government Departments, Statutory and voluntary Agencies and others who have a role to play.

The Agency will provide advice to Ministers and Government Departments North and South and to the North/South Ministerial Council on issues of policy and strategy. It will be a facilitator for the mainstreaming of Ulster Scots.

Ulster Scots should be available within the formal education system as part of the curriculum and the Agency will work with the relevant Departments and organisations North and South to deliver this. The Agency will focus on history and heritage, initially as part of the history curriculum but will also cross into other themes such as geography and citizenship. It is not intended that the Agency be much more than a persuader for this, though where appropriate the Agency may make resources available to assist with educational development. The Agency will also work with individual schools, colleges and universities to promote the academic study of Ulster Scots.

It is widely recognised that cultural tourism is a vitally important component of the economy in both jurisdictions. It is equally important in the growth and development of communities. The Agency will therefore work with Tourism Ireland, NITB, Failte Ireland and all relevant agencies to improve the visitor

experience by supporting Ulster Scots activity which will be a valuable element of time spent in Ireland for visitor and resident alike.

Ulster Scots influence is all around us including in our “built heritage”. The Agency will therefore engage with organisations such as the Environment and Heritage Service to develop greater awareness of this aspect of the heritage.

During the period of this plan we will witness the 400th anniversary of one of the defining moments in our shared history – The Plantation of Ulster. The Agency will draw upon the experience from the anniversaries of The Hamilton and Montgomery Settlement and The Flight of The Earls to provide leadership in commemorating this anniversary and will work with local Councils and voluntary and statutory bodies to ensure that the commemorations are appropriate and timely.

The Agency recognises the important role to be played by the Ulster Scots Heritage Council and will provide core funding to that organisation during the period of this plan.

Board members and Agency staff have a close working relationship with colleagues in Foras na Gaeilge and this is evidenced in the various joint projects organised by the Language Body.

The Agency will focus on the following:

- Issues around migration. Key partners may include the Ulster Historical Foundation and the Centre for Migration Studies but will also involve the community, academics and academic Institutions;
- Work with Government and other agencies to increase awareness of the impact of the Ulster Scots on the built heritage and landscape;

- Engaging with the community and Statutory Bodies to create and develop Ulster Scots content within the visitor experience;
- Relationship with organisations such as the Arts Council the Agency will contribute to the development of art in public places;
- Work with the Education Authorities to aid the development of Ulster Scots history in the curriculum;
- The provision of leadership to ensure the success of the commemorations of the 400th anniversary of the Plantation;
- The organisation of joint projects with Foras na Gaeilge under the umbrella of the Language Body each year.

WORKING WITH OTHERS PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:

- Contribute support to one major conference or seminar each year;
- Provide support, or contribute to support, to enable one piece of public art to be commissioned each year;
- A measured improvement in the amount of Ulster Scots material on the curriculum;
- A measured positive response to the commemorative events around the anniversary of the Plantation;
- Organise three projects each year as the Language Body (ie jointly with Foras na Gaeilge).

7. COMMITMENT TO A FIRST CLASS SERVICE

The Agency considers itself to be a service provider. To ensure that we offer a first class service to our stakeholders and partners we will strive to ensure that our processes and procedures operate effectively and efficiently.

The Agency is part of the North /South Language Body and as such recognises and accepts the need to ensure that all its policies, actions and programmes comply with the overall policies and legal requirements of the Government of the United Kingdom and the Government of the Republic of Ireland.

Accordingly, the Agency ensures:

- That effective communication is maintained with the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure in Northern Ireland and with the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs in the Republic of Ireland; and with the Secretariat of the North/South Ministerial Council;
- That the Agency works to the provisions set out in the Financial Memorandum; and adheres to the outline of financial procedures issued by the relevant Departments;
- That, in each jurisdiction, statutory duties, and wider public service policies in relation to openness and accountability, freedom of information, equality, better government etc, is fully complied with.

8. VALUES

The Ulster-Scots Agency will:

- Observe the highest standards of propriety involving impartiality, integrity and objectivity in relation to the management of public funds and all aspects of its operation;
- Maximize value for money through ensuring that services are delivered in the most effective, efficient and economical way, within available resources;
- Be accountable to the Northern Ireland Assembly, Dáil Éireann and the North/South Ministerial Council, users of services, individual citizens and staff for the activities of the Agency, the stewardship of public funds, and the extent to which key performance targets and objectives are met;
- In accordance with legislation and the Governments policies on openness, comply fully with Freedom of Information legislation and the principles of Service First;
- Promote equality of opportunity in dealing with staff, members of the public and comply in all respects with equality and human rights legislation.

9. HUMAN RESOURCES

The Ulster-Scots Agency is committed to the principles of business excellence. It will achieve this by realising fully the skills and experience of its staff.

Consequently the Agency will:

- Promote fairness and equality;
- Place a priority on staff training and development;
- Encourage team working within an open and participative management culture;
- Maintain good industrial relations.

10. EQUALITY

In accordance with the provisions of Northern Ireland Act 1998, The North/South Language Body has produced an Equality Scheme which has been approved by the Equality Commission.

The Scheme sets out a substantial programme of work in terms of organizational arrangements, training, screening of all policies, procedures, and programmes and the carrying out of Equality Impact Assessments.

EQUALITY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:

- Increase the overall level of client satisfaction;
- Ensure that all correspondence is dealt with effectively and efficiently within the timescales prescribed;
- Ensure that all legislative requirements are met on time;
- Increase overall client satisfaction with the grant application process.

11. OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The Agency seeks to take advantage of opportunities:

- To promote a greater sense of identity in the Ulster-Scots community;
- To promote the Ulster-Scots language, culture and history;
- To be involved in the European movement for the recognition of minority language;
- To learn from the experience of other minority languages;
- To play its part in supporting the relevant strategic objectives of the two sponsoring Departments.

The Agency recognises that there are challenges to be met if the Corporate Plan is to achieve its objectives.

These challenges are summarised as follows:

- Lack of public awareness;
- Erosion of the language;
- The linguistic debate about the language, locally and in Scotland;
- The future of the Ulster-Scots language;
- Increasing homogenization and globalization of culture.

Through the implementation of this plan the Ulster-Scots Agency will contribute to a revival of awareness and appreciation of the rich and diverse linguistic and cultural heritage of our society.

The Ulster-Scots Agency contribution will require the engagement of social partners on the Island of Ireland, in Scotland, in the European minority language scene, and with the diaspora of the Ulster-Scots throughout the world.

12. SUMMARY OF RESOURCES

This plan includes a range of measures which will require significant funding and which will be put in place over a designated period of time. These measures will be considered in due course in the context of available resources.

13. STAFFING

An Organisation Chart setting out the proposed staffing structure of the Agency is shown at Annex 1.

14. FUNDING

The Ulster-Scots Agency is funded by grants from the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure in Northern Ireland and the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs in the South.

The Agency believes that its proposals and the growing demand for support for cultural activities suggest that a three year budget of £18.6m should inform this Corporate Plan.

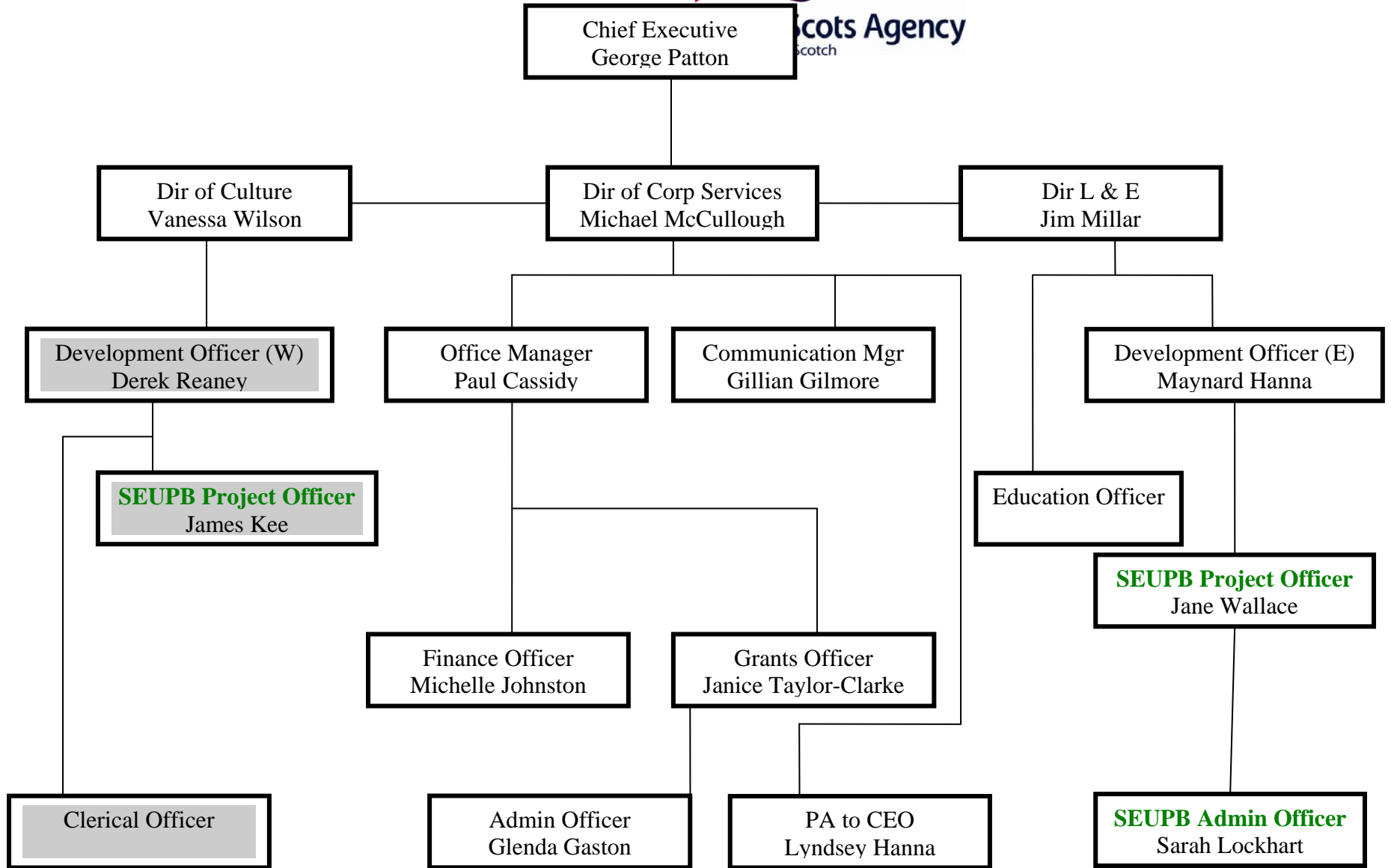
15. PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE

On the basis of the Agency's evaluation of future work, programme expenditure over 2008 – 2010 is estimated at £18.6m. plus a total of £2m for the Plantation commemorations over the period of the plan.

A breakdown of this expenditure across the areas of operation of the Agency is shown in the Table below:

Programme Expenditure – 2008- 2010

	£
1. Marketing	£6.15m
2. Serving the Community	£8.m
3. Working with Others	£2m
4. Providing a First Class Service	£2.45m
.	
Total Programme Expenditure	£18.6 + £2m (Plantation Project)



Raphoe Office, Donegal