

**Tha Board O Ulster-Scotch
96th Board Meeting
12 February 2010
Ulster-Scots Agency Board Room
Belfast**

Present;	Mrs Angela Graham
	Mrs Jacqui Reed
	Dr Ian Adamson
	Mr William Humphrey
	Mr William Leathem
	Mr John Hunter
	Mr Tony Crooks
In attendance:	Mr Jim Millar
	Miss Hazel Campbell
Recording Secretary:	Ms Lyndsey Hanna

1. Welcome from the Chairperson

- 1.1 The Chairman welcomed members of the Board and in particular Mr Tony Crooks from Dublin. Members introduced themselves.
- 1.2 The Chairman opened the meeting without officials present and summarised discussions he had had with the Agency's Chief Executive, Mr George Patton, in the early part of January in which he had indicated his intention to return to work around the middle of February on completion of his eight week period of sick leave. However, in a phone call on 8 February Mr Patton indicated that he had decided not to return to work. He explained that he would write confirming his decision. The letter was received on 9 February in a blank envelope and opened by staff. The Chairman circulated the letter for members to read. The Board agreed that the Chairman should liaise with the Department over how best to action Mr Patton's letter, taking into account legal advice. The Board also noted the report that Mr Patton had accepted a new job as Community Development Officer for Co Armagh Community Development, starting in March.

- 1.3 The Chairman reported on meetings he had had with the Minister, representatives of core funded groups, the Chairman and Chief Executive of Foras na Gaeilge and the CAL Committee at Stormont (supported by the Interim Chief Executive and Jim Millar). Officials rejoined the meeting at this point."

2. Apologies

- 2.1 Apologies were accepted on behalf of Mr McCullough.

3. Minutes of last Meeting

- 3.1 The minutes of the last Board meeting were tabled.

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

4. Matters Arising

4.1 Internal Auditors

Miss Campbell reported that DCAL was looking at extending into its own internal audit service to a number of their ALB's, including the Agency. The Agency was asked not to proceed with a new tender for audit services.

- 4.2 Mr Hunter proposed that the Agency extend its current contract with Goldbatt McGuigan for a further six months until DCAL set out their proposal to the Agency.

- 4.3 ***Proposed and Agreed: that the current contract is extended for six months.***

4.4 Core Funded Bodies

The Terms of Reference for Core Funded Bodies was agreed by DCAL. With the exception of one amendment the Board proposed and agreed to proceed with the independent evaluation.

- 4.5 ***Proposed and Agreed: that the paper be adopted.***

- 4.6 The Business Case for the Lawrence Holden Project was approved by DCAL and a letter of offer was now ready to issue.

- 4.7 ***ACTION: Executive to send out the Letter of Offer immediately.***

- 4.8 The final list of awards for music and dance tuition in 2010 was tabled. The Executive informed the Board that 43 applications have been rejected as they did not meet the Agency criteria for funding. Five grant applications were being held awaiting further information.
- 4.9 In total there were 48 dance and 263 music tuition awards approved by the Agency.
- 4.10 Mr Leathem queried changes to some of the amounts of grant offered compared with the list provided at the 18 December 2009 Board meeting. Miss Campbell explained that the list circulated at the December meeting was still subject to a final check which resulted in some amendments. The Executive would be happy to explain any differences.
- 4.11 **ACTION:** *It was agreed that Mr Millar would contact Mr Leathem to explain specific decisions.*
- 4.12 The Board members indicated that it would be helpful if the list could be analysed by location/tuition kind.
- 4.13 **Corporate Governance**
Miss Campbell reported on the Accountability meeting with Sponsor Departments on 27 January 2010.
- 4.14 **“Onboard” Training**
Miss Campbell had contacted the Chief Executive’s Forum and received three options on dates in March for Board member training. None of the dates were suitable for Members and alternatives dates are to be pursued. While some members had already attended a training event, the Chairman was keen that all members should make an effort to attend.
- 4.15 **ACTION:** *Miss Campbell to seek further possible dates and to request a list of modules covered in the training.*
- 4.16 Miss Campbell advised the Board that a meeting of the North/South Ministerial Council was likely to be scheduled sometime in the Spring.
- 4.17 The Chairman indicated that he was keen for a meeting of the Language Body to take place in March/April 2010.
- 4.18 **ACTION:** *Miss Campbell to seek further clarification for possible dates.*

5. Re-Constitution of the Audit Committee

- 5.1 Mr Hunter advised the Board that an Audit Committee had to be appointed.
- 5.2 As the Chairman cannot serve on the Committee, he invited the other members of the Board to volunteer their services.
- 5.3 Mr Crooks volunteered his services to sit as a member on the Audit Committee.
- 5.4 Mr Hunter suggested that future Audit Committee meetings could take place every quarter in the morning prior to a planned Board meeting. He hoped this would be helpful in terms of the time commitment from members.
- 5.5 Mrs Graham re-considered her resignation as a member of the Audit Committee under the above condition.
- 5.6 Dr Adamson volunteered to also take up the position as a member.
- 5.7 It was proposed and agreed that Mr Crooks would Chair the Audit Committee with Mrs Graham and Dr Adamson as members.
- 5.8 ***ACTION:*** Miss Campbell to make available the Audit Committee Handbook for all members and organise training.

6. Interim Chief Executive Officer's Report

- 6.1 This report was tabled.
- 6.2 Miss Campbell gave a brief overview of the issues in her report.

7. Monreagh Heritage and Education Centre – Funding Appeal

- 7.1 Prior to leaving the meeting, Mrs Reed queried the applicability of the terms of reference (TOR) for the independent evaluation for the Monreagh Centre as it was not currently in receipt of core-funding. Miss Campbell agreed that not all criteria in the TOR would apply and she would amend the document to make this clear. Mrs Reed then left the meeting.
- 7.2 ***ACTION:*** Miss Campbell to amend the Terms of Reference

7.3 Mr Hunter agreed with the recommendation from the Executive that this funding appeal should be deferred until the Evaluation of Core Funded Bodies has been completed.

7.4 *Proposed and Agreed:* *that the Agency should defer consideration of this application until the independent evaluation has been completed.*

7.5 Mrs Reed returned to the meeting.

8. 2010 Business Plan

8.1 The Board approved the 2010 Business Plan with the revised strategic aims. Two other minor changes are to be made to paragraphs 5.1 and 5.4 to reflect more clearly the cross-border nature of the Agency's programmes.

8.2 *Proposed and Agreed:* *The 2010 Business Plan was approved subject to the above amendments.*

9. Finance Report

9.1 Miss Campbell reported that the Agency is awaiting clarification if the Agency is to operate a cash budget or an accruals budget. The Agency's accounts are on an accruals basis.

9.2 The Board members noted the expenditure outturn for 2009.

9.3 The Board members queried whether sufficient funds had been allocated to Seminars/Conference in 2010 as there is still a need to assist community groups in the completion of application forms and understanding the requirements of the Financial Assistance Scheme. The Executive has already planned a number of seminars and will keep the budget under review.

9.4 The Chairman was concerned to keep office running costs under control, including consumable items such as stationary.

9.5 *Proposed and Agreed:* *the Board noted the final 2009 budget position and the 2010 in-year budget position.*

10. 2010 Festival Awards

10.1 Mr Millar circulated an interim paper on this matter to the Board.

- 10.2 Mr Millar informed the Board that the Agency Development Officers were in the process of assessing festival awards. This engaged a lot of their time following up incomplete applications. This demonstrated that there is a need for further training in the community on the application process.
- 10.3 The interim paper included recommendations for 5 successful groups (to date) to receive festival funding. These 5 festival applications needed urgent approval as they were to take place in Spring. Further recommendations will be tabled at the next Board meeting.
- 10.4 The Board were informed that to date 11 applications would be rejected as they had not met the criteria for funding.
- 10.5 Members raised some concerns about the extent of documentation required and the need to send supporting documentation, such as their constitution and child protection policies for each application, if this was already submitted for another programme. Miss Campbell agreed that the process should be reviewed to see if it could be made easier for groups to apply.
- 10.6 Concerns were also raised concerning unrealistic return dates for additional information
- 10.7 Mr Leathem raised a query on the Hillsborough Festival award as there was a significant difference from the amount requested and the award proposed.
- 10.8 ***ACTION:*** Mr Millar to provide Mr Leathem with a breakdown of funding allocated.
- 10.9 ***Proposed and Agreed:*** the Board agreed the proposed awards for the 5 festivals at the meeting.

11. Review of Financial Assistance Scheme

- 11.1 The Board noted the threefold increase in applications for music and dance tuition in 2010 compared with the previous year and the pressures this created for the grants team in administering the scheme.
- 11.2 This resulted in delays in getting the letters of offer issued, amounts offered were lower than anticipated and the number of appeals was on the increase.

- 11.2 Miss Campbell indicated that this situation was not sustainable and she recommended that the grants criteria and procedures needed to be reviewed. Mr Hunter indicated he was concerned about the monitoring and audit trail
- 11.3 While Board members agreed that processes needed to be reviewed they highlighted the ongoing need for support to community groups and that this has to be factored into the review.
- 11.4 Mrs Graham asked that letters sent requesting additional information needed to give a longer timeframe for groups in the South due to the postal services.
- 11.5 ***Proposed and Agreed:*** *the Board agreed to the proposed review of the arrangements for music and dance tuition and the criteria for funding festivals with a view to having new arrangements in place for 2011.*

12. 400th Anniversary of Plantation of Ulster

- 12.1 Miss Campbell informed the Board that she met with the Minister, Nelson McCausland on 21 January 2010 with DCAL's Arms Length Bodies in the cultural sector to discuss a coordinated approach to commemorating upcoming anniversaries in the next decade including the Plantation of Ulster.
- 12.2 The Minister was keen that a strategy should be developed to encourage the DCAL family to work together on these events and share resources and archive material where appropriate.
- 12.3 As yet, the Agency has no firm plans on what it should do to mark this anniversary. The Executive welcomed suggestions and possible opportunities to work in partnership with others, which would have greater impact than the Agency working on its own.
- 12.4 Dr Adamson informed the members that he is the Chair of The Grand Unionist Centenary Committee. This group was set up to celebrate forthcoming centenaries. Contact could be made to explore possible joint projects for the 400th Commemorations of the Plantation of Ulster.
- 12.5 Mrs Graham suggested that the Agency could hold a conference on the Anniversary, linking up with other groups with an interest in this subject.
- 12.6 Ms Graham informed the Board that she has come into contact with other groups celebrating the Plantation and that she would investigate if anything was planned in her area.

- 12.7 Mr Crooks suggested that the Agency look at a possible drama project on the Plantation of Ulster.
- 12.8 Board members suggested a good quality book full of facts that families could pass down through generations, and content could be supplied by the community.
- 12.09 Mr Leathem highlighted that last year the Agency carried out work in identifying possible authors for a book on the Plantation.
- 12.10 Mr Humphrey suggested that the Agency should follow up with the working group who are working on possible Tourism Trails for NI.
- 12.11 Mr Hunter concluded that the Agency should feed in these suggestions to the DCAL group and follow-up with meetings with potential partners.
- 12.12 Miss Campbell noted these suggestions.
- 12.13 **ACTION:** *Miss Campbell to feedback suggestions to DCAL group and look for possible partnerships.*

13. First Derry Presbyterian Church

- 13.1 The Executive recommended that the Agency should provide £4k for the consultancy assignment for the Interpretative Centre as outlined in the paper tabled.
- 13.2 **Proposed and Agreed:** *the Board agreed to provide £4k for the consultancy assignment for the Interpretative Centre.*

14. Milwaukee Irish Fest

- 14.1 The Executive recommended that the Agency set aside a budget of £7,000 (based on last year's budget) to facilitate involvement in the festival.
- 14.2 An open tender exercise would be carried out to identify a suitable Ulster-Scots musical showcase. The budget would cover the travel costs and any associated performance fees. However, where the cost of travel and performer fees exceeds the allocated budget, groups must be in a position to demonstrate how the shortfall will be met.

14.3 It was also recommended that potential lecturers should also be considered and this could include Board and/or staff members, with relevant expertise.

14.4 ***Proposed and Agreed:*** *the Board agreed that the Agency set aside a budget of £7k to facilitate involvement in the 2010 Irish Fest.*

15. Lambeg Music Book

15.1 The Executive recommended this project which will form part of the Agency's Marketing Strategy for 2010.

15.2 The benefits of this project are to preserve and document the tradition of the Lambeg drum, making the art-form of the Lambeg drum more accessible to a wider audience and to create an educational tool that would allow the rhythms of the Lambeg drum to be easily taught in schools, community groups, drumming classes etc.

15.3 The cost of collecting, transcribing and recording these rhythms is estimated at £5,000. Further costs for the publication are anticipated to be circa £3,500. (2,000 copies)

15.5 ***Proposed and Agreed:*** *the Board agreed that the Agency engage a suitable individual to provide material relating to Lambeg drum rhythms that would be notated in musical form, and which would form the basis for an Agency publication in 2010.*

.15.6 ***ACTION:*** *Mr Millar was instructed to take the project forward.*

16 Strategic Organisational Review

16.1 The Board members discussed the paper tabled on the Organisational Review.

16.2 To bring stability to the organisation and clarity for staff on their roles and responsibilities, the Board agreed that the outstanding issues on the structural review should be brought to a conclusion as soon as possible.

16.3 Of the recommendations previously approved by the Board on 25 September 2009, only the SO Accountant post has been approved by the Departments and the North South Ministerial Council (at their meeting 2 December 2009). The recruitment process for this post has commenced and interviews will take place on 25 February 2010.

16.4 The Board approved the paper and the additional recommendations presented on the Strategic Organisational Review. The Board noted that these proposals were still subject to approval of the Departments and the NSMC. However, the transfer of the Grants section from Corporate Services to Operations could proceed without further approvals.

16.5 ***Proposed and Agreed:*** *The paper tabled and recommendations outlined.*

17 AOB

17.1 Mrs Reed suggested that the Board should send a letter of congratulations to Mr Joe Hamill from DCRGA on his new appointment to the position of Secretary General.

17.2 Mrs Graham informed the Board that she had sent a letter to Gerry Kearney former Secretary General at DCRGA to recognise his work and support to the Agency Board.

17.3 Mrs Reed wished to record her thanks for the work of the Agency staff on the success of the recent Agency Burns Week. She also thanked Mr Millar on the work completed on the documentary “Hamley Tongue - Cultúr Ceilte” which had been well received.

17.4 Mr Humphrey advised that he has been invited to represent the Agency Board at an event at the Ullans Centre on 19 March 2010 but unfortunately he would not be able to attend. The Agency will be represented at the event as Miss Campbell was planning to attend.

18. Date and Venue of next Board Meeting

18.1 The next meeting will take place on Wednesday 31 March 2010.

Signed:.....

Date:.....