



Business Plan 2023

Contents

1. Introduction3

2. Review of Progress against 2022 Business Plan5

3. Proposed 2023 Budget8

4. Strategic Priorities for 2023 10

5. Monitoring and Reporting 19

1. Introduction

This Business Plan describes the key elements of the work which the Ulster-Scots Agency proposes to undertake in 2023 in furtherance of the strategic priorities and objectives set out in the Agency's Corporate Plan 2023-2025.

Vision

The vision of the Ulster-Scots Agency is that the rich, vibrant identity and global impact of the Ulster-Scots community should be recognised, respected and embraced at home and abroad.

Mission

The mission of the Ulster-Scots Agency is to inspire and empower people and communities in Ulster to embrace their Ulster-Scots identity, build kinship with those outside Ulster who share our identity and friendship inside Ulster with those who do not.

Core Values

The Agency is committed to excellence in everything that we do. In working to deliver on our Vision and Mission we will be guided by the following Core Principles:

Authenticity – the Ulster-Scots heritage that we develop and promote will be authentic and will be based on sound knowledge and research on Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture.

Quality – we will seek at all times to present Ulster-Scots in the best possible way, so that we do justice to the fantastic richness of our Ulster-Scots heritage.

Capacity Building – in all of our activities we will work to involve the Ulster-Scots community sector, continuously seeking new opportunities to grow the sector and enhance its capacity.

Partnership – we will develop partnerships across the public, private and community sectors to maximise the skills and resources that can be secured to achieve our mission.

Mainstreaming - we will work to enhance the presence of Ulster-Scots culture and heritage within mainstream cultural institutions such as museums, galleries and heritage centres.

Equality of Opportunity – we will ensure that in the delivery of our work we promote equality of opportunity and good relations.

Poverty – we will look for opportunities to deliver on our mission in ways which can make a difference in disadvantaged communities and ensure that economic barriers do not prevent people from enjoying Ulster-Scots activities.

Social Inclusion – we will look for opportunities to ensure the engagement of those who might be at risk of social exclusion.

North/South – our remit covers the development and promotion of Ulster-Scots in both Northern Ireland and Ireland; and we will ensure that appropriate attention is paid to the development of Ulster-Scots in the border counties of Ireland, where there is a rich, but underdeveloped Ulster-Scots heritage.

East/West – relationships with Scotland and North America are key to maximising the potential of Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture. Having due regard to resource constraints, we will seek to develop initiatives on an East/West axis which have a positive impact on Ulster-Scots here.

2. Review of Progress against 2022 Business Plan

Despite the challenges created by a resurgence of Covid-19 at the start of the year, 2022 was a year of strong recovery for the Ulster-Scots Agency and the wider Ulster-Scots community. Progress against each of our three strategic priorities is considered below.

Inspire

The Agency supported a range of projects to safeguard or promote Ulster-Scots heritage during the year. We continued to build on our relationships with the Linen Hall Library, Belfast and the Gamble Library at Union Theological College, Belfast, both repositories of major Ulster-Scots collections. As well as supporting the preservation of historic books, we supported the purchase of new cases at UTC and worked with them on an exhibition of historic Bibles to mark the 500th Anniversary of Martin Luther's translation of the Bible. We also supported improvements to the document and artefact storage facilities of the Presbyterian Historical Society of Ireland, based at the Assembly Buildings in Belfast. In the border counties, we continued to work with partners in progressing the Monaghan Peace Campus and Bailieborough Plantation Museum, as well as providing support for the development of Ulster-Scots visitor facilities at the former Presbyterian Church at Cahans, Ballybay.

Ulster-Scots heritage was made more visible in the public realm through the unveiling of a new statue of Robert Hill Hanna VC in Killeel, Co Down and a bust of Andrew Bonar Law, the first Ulster-Scot to become UK Prime Minister, installed in the Town Hall in Coleraine, Co Londonderry. Following a period of disruption during the pandemic, our programme of Blue Plaques in conjunction with the Ulster History Circle returned to normal, seeing a plaques for Margaret Scott Hawthorne (leading trade unionist and women's advocate in New Zealand), unveiled by Heather Humphreys TD in Carnafane, Co Cavan; John Herivel (WW2 Bletchley Park Code Breaker), unveiled by Professor Alistair Adair DL at Methodist College, Belfast; and William Starrat (the earliest published Ulster-Scots poet), unveiled by Robert Lowry Scott, Lord Lieutenant of Co Tyrone at the Alley Theatre in Strabane.

Continuing progress in relation to the Ulster-Scots language was confirmed with the publication of the results of the 2021 census in Northern Ireland which showed the number of people reporting a level of ability in Ulster-Scots rising to over 190,000; an increase of over 50,000 since 2011. These results provided the basis for an integrated marketing campaign in relation to the language, which coincided with Ulster-Scots Language Week. The programme was delivered fully in person for the first time since 2019 and saw events for all ages taking place across all nine counties for the first time. Writing in Ulster-Scots has continued to grow, supported by our annual Ulster-Scots Writing Competition, in association with the Linen Hall Library.

Despite the loss of the first quarter to the Omicron variant, interest in the Agency's school programmes was strong, effectively returning to pre-pandemic levels. Across the nine counties 65 schools were supported for tuition in Ulster-Scots music or dance; 25 schools completed eight week long After School Clubs and 17 schools were supported on the Ulster-Scots Flagship School programme, with 5 schools achieving their award and six new schools joining the programme. Introductory workshops were also delivered in 55 schools, which should be a positive sign for future growth.

Empower

Early in the year the Agency worked in conjunction with the Department for Communities in Northern Ireland to deliver the Covid Recovery Programme for Ulster-Scots Organisations (CRPO), which saw 231 groups receiving more than £900,000 to help with the financial impact of the Coronavirus pandemic. During the Covid period we established a new Small Events Grant to support the recovery of community activities and two rounds were delivered during 2022, with 206 grants awarded across Ulster. We continued to provide capacity building support to the Ulster-Scots community through core funding to the Ulster-Scots Community Network and annual funding to three Ulster-Scots Community Impact Projects in West Tyrone, Mourne and North/West Belfast, which played a vital role in supporting Ulster-Scots groups to access Covid and other funds, as well as delivering a wide range of cultural outputs.

Applications for music and dance tuition in the community showed strong growth, with 141 grants awarded, an increase of 25% on 2019, which is attributable to new or returning groups that we supported through Covid grants then applying for mainstream tuition support.

Applications for community festivals also increased, with 12 awards made, an increase of 50% on 2019. Worries about Covid safety did however have an impact on the number of Ulster-Scots Summer Schools, with 16 projects supported, which is still some way short of the pre-pandemic level of 24.

The number of participants securing accredited certification for Ulster-Scots music and dance stood at 312. This was down on the pre-pandemic level, but was attributable largely to the timing of Lambeg Drumming courses, where no awards were made during the year due to delays in completion. November saw the return of our successful graduation event, hosted by most recent NI Education Minister Michelle McIlveen MLA at Parliament Buildings, Stormont, which was also the venue for a high-profile event to mark the success of Ulster's Pipe Bands at the 2022 World Pipe Band Championships.

Engage

Ulster-Scots was represented at the Hawick Reivers Festival in the Scottish Borders, which happened for the first time since 2019; and the Ulster input was also extended with the delivery of an online lecture on the Border Reivers in Ulster, in partnership with the Ulster Historical Foundation. The Border Reivers was also the basis of a new East-West School Twinning between the primary schools in Lisbellaw and Drumlanrig; and this was added to by the establishment of a second twinning between Creavery PS, Antrim and Sorn PS, Mauchline.

The Agency worked in partnership with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association at the Northern Ireland Assembly to support a Commonwealth Day cultural showcase at Parliament Buildings, Stormont; and we were also delighted to host the Secretary of State for Scotland, Alistair Jack MP and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Brandon Lewis MP, on a visit to the Discover Ulster-Scots Centre where they were joined at a reception by representatives from Ulster-Scots groups that benefited from Covid support funding.

3. Proposed 2023 Budget

This business plan is based on a baseline budget of £2,678,907. The budget has been profiled against our key work areas as follows:

	2022 Budget (£)	2023 Proposed Budget (£)
Serving the Community	880,450	911,150
Partnership Working	51,500	79,300
Marketing	168,322	197,470
Education	211,700	211,000
Uplift Serving the Community	88,000	-
Uplift Partnership	-	-
Providing a First Class Service	1,217,504	1,218,556
Total	2,617,476	2,617,476
Additional Pension Contributions DFC	38,439	61,431
Sub Total Budget	2,655,915	2,678,907
DFC Covid Intervention	1,400,000	-
Total Budget	4,055,915	2,678,907

DFC	2,001,546	2,024,538
DTCAGSM	654,369	654,369
DFC Covid Intervention	1,400,000	-
Total Budget	4,055,915	2,678,907

The Agency currently has an approved staff complement of 15.77 posts:

- CEO (G7 equivalent)
- 3 Directors (DP equivalent) – Corporate Services; Education & Language; and Development
- 4 Development Officers (SO equivalent)
- 3 SO Corporate Staff (HR/Office Manager; SO Accountant; and Marketing Officer)
- 3 EO2s (Grants/Marketing/Finance)
- 2 AOs (Admin/Grants)

In the event that NSMC is available as an approval mechanism, we are proposing a review of senior management grading and an increase of 4 FTE to the existing staff complement to 19.77 posts:

- CEO (G5 equivalent)
- 4 Directors – Policy & Research (G7) Corporate Services; Education & Language; and Development (Currently DP but to be reviewed)
- 1 Policy Officer (DP)
- 6 Development Officers (SO equivalent)
- 3 SO Corporate Staff (HR/Office Manager; SO Accountant; and Marketing Officer)
- 3 EO2s (Grants/Marketing/Finance)
- 2 AOs (Admin/Grants)

If it appears that NSMC will not be functioning, we will work to address staffing needs through the development of fixed term projects which can be approved by Sponsor Departments.

4. Strategic Priorities for 2023

During 2023 the Ulster-Scots Agency will work to build on the post pandemic recovery that was achieved in 2022, working to support the Ulster-Scots cultural community to address the legacy of the pandemic and the impact of global economic pressures, in particular the cost of energy. We will continue to adjust to the new cultural landscape that is being formed as a result of the New Decade, New Approach agreement, including the commitment to establish an Office of Identity; a commissioner's office to look after Ulster-Scots; and a legal duty on the Department of Education to promote Ulster-Scots in the education system, which have yet to come into effect. We will also continue to broaden and deepen the Ulster-Scots movement by bringing new groups into the organised sector and enhancing the capacity at the core of the sector to support a larger cadre of groups. We will make use of additional baseline resources to increase the capacity of the Ulster-Scots Agency and key community and cultural groups within the sector to bring about this positive change, as well as building on the success of existing initiatives.

Our programme of activity for the year is built around the Strategic Aims of our 2023-2025 Corporate Plan, *Inspire*, *Empower* and *Engage*.

SA1 – Inspire

The Agency will deliver a range of projects and programmes that will identify, interpret and animate Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture. By doing so we will seek to inspire those of all ages to learn more about their Ulster-Scots identity.

We will continue to build on the success of key initiatives like Burns Week in January and Ulster-Scots Language Week in November. We will also raise awareness of the recognition of the Ulster-Scots community under the Framework Convention for National Minorities by establishing an annual Ulster-Scots Day in May, which will provide an opportunity to focus on the cohesion of the sector and wider community. Ulster-Scots will also be promoted through a programme of events and exhibitions around important anniversaries such as the Belfast Agreement and the 1798 Rebellion and major national events like the Coronation of King Charles III. We will continue to work with key cultural organisations and public sector partners to deliver major projects which safeguard important Ulster-Scots heritage assets and support the development of facilities where locals and visitors alike can learn about Ulster-Scots.

We will work to manage the increasing demand for Ulster-Scots activities in schools within our available resourcing until the positive impact of the new educational duty is realised.

SA2 – Empower

The Agency will continue to equip individuals and groups with knowledge and skills to engage with Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture through a variety of projects and programmes.

We will embed the recovery of our traditional grant programmes, for Summer Schools, festivals and community-based tuition, while continuing to refine and improve our Small Events Grant and Youth Providers Grant programmes. We will utilise additional resources made available by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sports and Media to deliver an Energy Support Grant for Ulster-Scots venues and deliver a pilot grant programme for Ulster-Scots bands in Cavan, Monaghan and Donegal. Additional DTCAGSM resources outside of normal NSLB funding, will also be used to support work with schools in the border counties to design an Ulster-Scots programme for young people in their Transition Year.

Work to support Ulster-Scots musicians and dancers to achieve accredited standards will continue and we will build on the success of our annual graduation and celebration events at Parliament Buildings, Stormont. During the year we will also deliver our first annual Pipe Majors Masterclass in conjunction with Richard Parkes MBE of the Field Marshall Montgomery Pipe Band.

SA3 – Engage

The Agency will deliver a range of projects and programmes through which we will reach out, locally and globally, to enhance friendship with people in Ulster whose primary identity is not Ulster-Scots: and foster kinship with people beyond Ulster who share our identity. We will deliver a programme of outreach to other cultural minority communities in Northern Ireland to raise awareness of Ulster-Scots and promote mutual respect.

We will continue to build positive working relationships across the breadth of our shared language, heritage and culture with our kin in Scotland, not least our growing collaboration with Hawick Reivers Festival in the Scottish Borders, which will be celebrating its 20th year in 2023. We will also work to bring our East/West School Twinning Programme back to pre-pandemic levels.

We will also work to develop new approaches to diaspora outreach in relation to both the United States and the Commonwealth.

SA1 – Inspire

The Agency will identify, interpret and animate Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture.

	Activity	Measure	Target Date	Responsible Officer	Corp. Plan Target
1.1	Deliver a programme of activity in relation to Ulster-Scots Language Week	1 programme	December 2023	G Pearson	
1.2	Deliver a programme of activity in relation to key dates in the Ulster-Scots cultural calendar	1 programme	December 2023	J Purse	
1.3	Support a programme of activity around Ulster-Scots Day	1 programme	May 2023	G Pearson	
1.4	Develop a promotional programme for Ulster-Scots around national and international awareness days	1 programme	December 2023	J Purse / G McCullough	
1.5	Support a programme of large-scale heritage projects promoting aspects of Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture	1 programme	December 2023	G Pearson	
1.6	Support a programme of Ulster-Scots promotional exhibitions	1 programme	December 2023	G McCullough	
1.7	Deliver a programme of Ulster-Scots promotional events	1 programme	December 2023	G McCullough	
1.8	Deliver a programme of Blue Plaques around Ulster celebrating significant Ulster-Scots figures	1 programme	December 2023	G Pearson	

	Activity	Measure	Target Date	Responsible Officer	Corp. Plan Target
1.9	Deliver an annual programme of printed promotional activity	1 programme	December 2023	G Pearson	
1.10	Deliver an annual programme of online promotional activity	1 programme	December 2023	J Purse	
1.11	Deliver an annual programme of radio advertising	1 programme	December 2023	J Purse	
1.12	Support primary schools via the Ulster-Scots Flagship School Programme	5 new Flagship School awards	December 2023	G Blair	
1.13	Deliver a North/South School Twinning Programme	1 programme	December 2023	G Blair	
1.14	Deliver a programme of activity in relation to the Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund	1 programme	December 2023	I Crozier / G Pearson	
1.15	Deliver a programme of Ulster-Scots Afterschool Clubs in Primary Schools	1 programme	December 2023	G Blair	
1.16	Deliver a programme of educational workshops for schools	1 programme	December 2023	G Blair	
1.17	Support a programme of Ulster-Scots music/dance tuition in schools	1 programme	December 2023	J Barr	
1.18	Support a programme of partnerships for the preservation and/or promotion of Ulster-Scots heritage assets	1 programme	December 2023	G Pearson	

	Activity	Measure	Target Date	Responsible Officer	Corp. Plan Target
1.19	Deliver a programme of activity in relation to the Coronation	1 programme	May 2023	J Barr	

SA2 – Empower

The Agency will equip individuals and groups with knowledge and skills to engage with Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture.

	Activity	Measures	Target Date	Responsible Officer	Corp. Plan Target
2.1	Deliver Core Funding Programme	1 programme	December 2023	D Reaney	
2.2	Deliver Community Impact Grant Programme	1 programme	December 2023	D Reaney	
2.3	Deliver Music & Dance Tuition Grant Programme	1 programme	December 2023	D Reaney	
2.4	Deliver Community Festivals Grant Programme	1 programme	December 2023	D Reaney	
2.5	Deliver Summer School Grant Programme	1 programme	December 2023	D Reaney	
2.6	Deliver FAS Other Grant Programme	1 programme	December 2023	D Reaney	
2.7	Deliver Small Events Grant Programme	1 programme	December 2023	D Reaney	
2.8	Deliver Energy Support Grant Programme	1 programme	March 2023	D Reaney	
2.9	Deliver Pilot Border Counties Bands Grant Programme	1 programme	March 2023	D Reaney	
2.10	Deliver a programme of talks on Ulster-Scots language to schools and community groups.	1 programme	December 2023	G Blair	
2.11	Support the promotion of Ulster-Scots through a programme of community radio broadcasting	2 broadcast periods	December 2023	G Blair	

	Activity	Measures	Target Date	Responsible Officer	Corp. Plan Target
2.12	Deliver 2 heritage projects in Rol border counties	2 projects	December 2023	D Reaney	
2.13	Support 300 learners in achieving recognised qualifications in music and dance	300 accredited learners	December 2023	J Barr	
2.14	Deliver a programme of events to mark the achievements of Ulster-Scots learners	1 programme	December 2023	J Barr	
2.15	Support delivery of the Richard Parkes MBE Pipe Majors Masterclass	1 masterclass	December 2023	J Barr	
2.16	Deliver Ingenious Ulster learning resource	1 resource	December 2023	J Barr	
2.17	Deliver Education Duty Seminar	1 seminar	April 2023	J Barr	
2.18	Develop an Ulster-Scots Agency language development plan	1 plan	December 2023	I Crozier	
2.19	Establish an Ulster-Scots Agency language advisory group	1 group	December 2023	I Crozier	

Additional Targets in respect of 2021 Baseline Budget Uplift

	Activity	Measures	Target Date	Responsible Officer	Corp. Plan Target
2.20	Develop and implement an annual Research Programme	1 programme	December 2023	Policy & Research Team	
2.21	Develop and implement an annual Consultation Plan	1 programme	December 2023	Policy & Research Team	
2.22	Develop and implement an annual Advice and Guidance programme	1 programme	December 2023	Policy & Research Team	
2.23	Develop and implement an annual Language Action Plan	1 plan	December 2023	Language Development Officer	
2.24	Develop and implement an annual Youth Development Plan	1 plan	December 2023	Youth Development Officer	
2.25	Deliver Youth Grants Programme	1 grant programme	December 2023	J Barr	
2.26	Increase Community Impact Programme by 25%	1 new project funded	July 2023	D Reaney	

SA3 – Engage

The Agency will reach out locally and globally, to enhance friendship with people in Ulster whose primary identity is not Ulster-Scots: and foster kinship with people beyond Ulster who have Ulster-Scots roots.

	Activity	Measure	Target Date	Responsible Officer(s)	Corp. Plan Target
3.1	Deliver a programme of outreach to other cultural minority communities.	1 programme	December 2023	G Pearson	CPSA3.6
3.2	Deliver a series of projects in relation to the Border Reivers.	2 projects	December 2023	G Pearson / G Blair	CPSA3
3.3	Develop a plan for USA diaspora outreach.	1 plan	December 2023	G Pearson	CPSA3.4
3.4	Deliver an East/West School Twinning Programme.	1 Programme	December 2023	G Blair	CPSA3.1
3.5	Support a programme of East/West relationship building.	1 programme	December 2023	I Crozier / G Pearson	CPSA3.3
3.6	Deliver a programme of activity in relation to the Ulster-Scots diaspora in the Commonwealth.	1 Programme	December 2023	G Pearson	CPSA3

5. Monitoring and Reporting

Each activity and target within this Business Plan has an identified owner within the organisation. Targets will be incorporated into the annual work plans of individual members of staff or staff reporting to them. Each member of staff will complete a monthly progress report to their line manager detailing progress against agreed targets. Directors will submit a monthly progress report to the Chief Executive.

The Board of the Ulster-Scots Agency will receive regular reports on progress against Business Plan targets.

Sponsor Departments will receive regular progress reports against Business Plan targets within the context of the agreed SLA and regular Accountability Meetings; and regular reports will be submitted for the consideration of the North-South Ministerial Council through periodic Language Sectoral Meetings.

Annually the Agency will issue reporting on performance through the Annual Report and Accounts.