



2026-2028 CORPORATE PLAN



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Discover
Ulster-Scots

HERITAGE
HISTORY
NEIGHBOURHOODS
COMMUNITY



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The Ulster-Scots Agency is entering the 2026-2028 period in a complex and changing environment. Building on the progress of the 2023-2025 Corporate Plan - during which the Agency refined its vision and mission, strengthened stakeholder relationships, and delivered a suite of programmes under its three strategic aims: Inspire, Empower, Engage.

This plan will respond to an evolving legal context (including cultural rights), demographic and technological changes, and shifting public expectations of cultural, community and educational bodies. It is shaped by governmental and sponsor department priorities in both Northern Ireland and Ireland, recent commitments around minority rights, education reform, and cultural heritage; and lessons learned from recent delivery, including where more capacity, sustainability, or partnership support is needed.

Our Strategic Objectives for the plan period will be:

- More people reached by activity promoting Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture
- More people engaging with learning opportunities in Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture
- A more vibrant and better-connected Ulster-Scots sector
- Improved attitudes towards Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture

Maximising delivery from this plan will be heavily dependent on the availability of resources. We are currently predicting a flat cash budget for year 1 of the Corporate Plan period. If the Agency is unable to attract additional funds to offset the impact of what will be a large real terms reduction (which will be challenging in the current financial climate), we will be faced with making significant cuts to community funding programmes, which have previously been protected.

Ian Crozier
Chief Executive





Ulster-Scots Agency

End of Year Review 2025

Supporting Ulster-Scots Language, Culture and Heritage

10 Festivals
~30,000 Attendees

21 Summer Schools
800+ Children

£250,000+
Music & Dance Tuition Grants

128 School Programmes
595+ Qualifications Issued

240,000+ Views
Tartan Day Livestream

NI Assembly Burns Event with MLAs

60
Leid Week Events Promoted

6,500+
Young People Learning Ulster-Scots

18 Exhibitions Loaned Out

Hogg **Riddell**
Two Blue Plaques Unveiled

Commemoration
General Richard Montgomery in Convoy, Donegal

Pennsylvania Packet Unveiling

28,600+ Social Media Followers

200K+ Newspaper Readers

#UlsterScots





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The Ulster-Scots Agency

- About The Ulster-Scots Agency
- How we operate
- Our Offices and how to contact us
- Our Values, Vision and Mission

ABOUT THE ULSTER-SCOTS AGENCY

WHO WE ARE

The Ulster-Scots Agency (Tha Boord o Ulster-Scotch) is an agency of the North South Language Body established under the British/Irish Agreement Act 1999 and the North/South Co-operation (Implementation Bodies) (NI) Order 1999.

Our statutory remit is the “promotion of greater awareness and use of Ullans and Ulster-Scots cultural issues, both within Northern Ireland and throughout the island”.

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

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

The Agency has a board of eight members (currently 3 vacancies), appointed by the North South Ministerial Council. These members, taken together with the sixteen similarly appointed board members of Foras na Gaeilge, comprise the membership of the North South Language Body.

The Agency currently has an approved staff complement of 15.77 FTE and is headed by the Chief Executive. The current structure of the Agency is set out at Appendix A.



HOW WE OPERATE

The Sponsor Departments for the North South Language Body are the Department for Communities (DfC) in Northern Ireland and the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport & Media (DTCAGSM) in Ireland.

The Ulster-Scots Agency is funded by grants voted by the Northern Ireland Assembly (75%) and by Dáil Éireann (25%).

In fulfilling our statutory remit, we are required to give effect to a number of important human rights instruments, including the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, which protects the Ulster-Scots language in the UK; the Framework Convention for National Minorities, under which the Ulster-Scots community is recognised as a national minority of the United Kingdom; and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Our work is also impacted by equality and good relations duties set out in the Northern Ireland Act 1998, which have recently been supplemented by an additional duty in relation to cultural identity: and provisions in respect of Ulster-Scots in the education system and the establishment of a Commissioner for the Ulster-Scots and the Ulster British tradition, all as a result of the Identity and Language (Northern Ireland) Act 2022.

We will work closely with the Commissioner, and the Office of Identity and Cultural Expression, in early 2026 to establish the respective lead roles of the various organisations in different matters pertinent to this plan.



OUR OFFICES

The Agency is headquartered in Belfast, with a regional office in Raphoe, Donegal.

Contact us at:



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OUR VISION

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

OUR MISSION

The Ulster-Scots Agency will inspire, educate 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 with those inside Ulster who do not.

OUR VALUES AND APPROACH



AUTHENTICITY

Our work to promote Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture will be underpinned by sound research which demonstrates its historical and contemporary authenticity and reflects its real contribution to life in these islands and around the world.



EXCELLENCE

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 language, heritage and culture: and operate to the highest standards of governance and customer service.



FAIRNESS

We will ensure that our services are delivered in a way that is fair and complies with equality, good relations and human rights requirements in both jurisdictions and work with other public bodies to encourage them to ensure similar compliance for Ulster-Scots.



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PERFORMANCE REVIEW

REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE

AGAINST 2023-2025 CORPORATE PLAN

Throughout the period of the last Corporate Plan, the Ulster-Scots Agency worked hard to manage heightened expectations and increasing demands from the community, in the face of a budget situation that has not delivered expected increases, while at the same time trying to promote innovation and a sense of forward momentum. This has been achieved by developing opportunities, building partnerships and seeking out additional resources to supplement our stagnant baseline budget.

EDUCATION

Demand for Ulster-Scots activity in schools continues to be strong, with the Agency delivering on average 57 school workshops, 29 After School Clubs and 92 music/dance tuition programmes. Over the period, 15 primary schools across Ulster attained their Ulster-Scots Flagship School award.

GRANTS

Interest in Ulster-Scots community festivals and summer schools remained steady, with the Agency supporting on average 11 festivals and 21 festivals per year. There was however a significant year on year increase in demand for community music and dance tuition grants in 2023 and 2024, which was sustained in 2025, with the Agency supporting 131, 158 and 150 projects respectively, which required allocation of additional resources from other areas.

In 2023 a total of 91 groups across Ulster were supported through a Small Events grant programme, including 40 groups who organised Ulster-Scots events to celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III. However, the scheme was subsequently discontinued due to increasing demands in other areas.

ACCREDITATION

More than 600 young people per year achieved accredited qualifications/certification in various genres of Ulster-Scots music and dance as a result of Agency funded tuition programmes; and our portfolio of learning opportunities was extended with the addition of the Richard Parkes MBE Masterclass for Pipe Majors, which aims to develop the next generation of leadership within our pipe band community.



REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE

RESOURCES IN ROI

Additional resources from our southern Sponsor Department in 2023 meant that the Agency was able to support 139 groups across Ulster with energy support grants to help with spiking energy costs and a pilot grant programme saw €100,000 awarded to Ulster-Scots marching bands in Cavan, Monaghan and Donegal to build confidence and musicality through investment in instruments and uniforms.



2024 saw two major projects come to fruition in the border counties, with the opening of the Monaghan Peace Campus and the Bailieborough Plantation Museum. The Peace Campus saw the Agency partner with Monaghan County Council to attract €14m in EU funds to support the delivery of a major new community hub including the first bespoke Ulster-Scots exhibition in any museum in the south. The Plantation Museum saw the Agency partnering with the local community to support the development of a landmark regeneration project with the first trilingual, intercultural exhibition on the island.

LEID (LANGUAGE) WEEK

Throughout the period, Ulster-Scots Language Week has continued to grow and language promotion activity has been enhanced by the filling of vacant posts which has attracted vital linguistic capacity to the organisation. A particular highlight came in late 2024 when the Ulster-Scots Agency hosted the conference of the Forum for Research on the Languages of Scotland and Ulster, the first time the conference had been held in Ulster since 2000. The Agency has also continued to invest in partnerships with the Linen Hall Library and Gamble Library at Union Theological College which hold significant Ulster-Scots language and heritage collections.



REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE

PROMOTION

Raising awareness of Ulster-Scots through our significant connections to the USA proved effective during the period.

One of our highest profile events, in April 2023, saw an Agency led exhibition at the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland in Belfast, featuring an original Dunlap Broadside (American Declaration of Independence), opened by US Envoy Joe Kennedy III, attracting over 3,000 visitors in 3 months.

A subsequent visit to Boston for the 250th anniversary of the Boston Tea Party demonstrated a strong appetite for collaboration in the US, which energised broader public sector interest; and participation in a NI US working group has recently seen the Agency hosting a visit from the America 250 Commission and leading the roll out of a £150k grant programme for the Department for Communities in Northern Ireland.





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2026 - 2028

- Strategic Objectives
- Business Objectives
- Planned Activities
- Measureable Performance Targets
- Monitoring, Evaluation and Governance
- Communicating the Plan

Strategic Objectives

The work of the Ulster-Scots Agency is relevant to Programme for Government priorities in both jurisdictions on the island of Ireland. The Northern Ireland Executive's [Programme for Government 2024-2027, *Doing What Matters Most*](#) and the Irish Programme for Government 2025, [Securing Ireland's Future](#), share in common:

- commitments to linguistic and cultural participation;
- diversity and inclusion;
- investing in young people;
- thriving communities and
- our place in the world.

These broad priorities are reflected in the Annual Business Plan and Statement of Strategy of our respective sponsor departments, the Department for Communities in Northern Ireland and the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht.

The Ulster-Scots Agency will contribute to these objectives by:

- increasing awareness of Ireland's cultural wealth;
- driving engagement in language, heritage and culture;
- building relationships within and between communities and promoting attitudinal change.

To achieve this shared vision and ambition we will seek to achieve the following Strategic Objectives:



More people reaching by activity promoting Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture



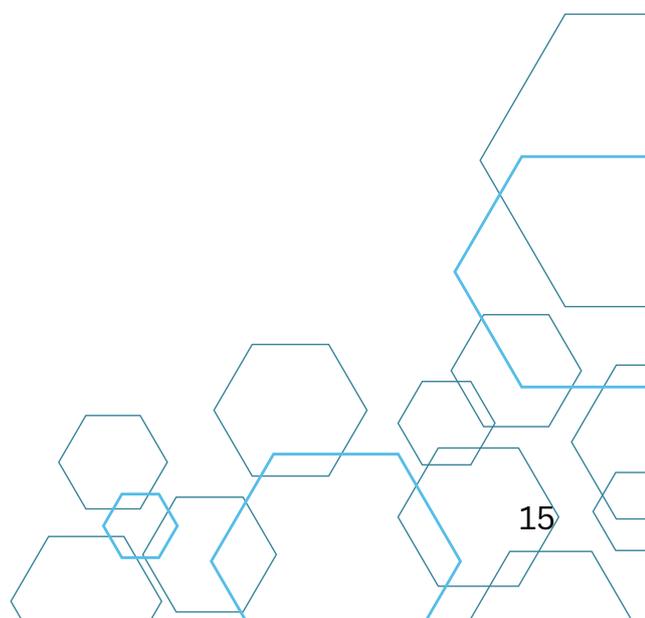
More people engaging with learning opportunities in Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture



A more vibrant and better-connected Ulster-Scots sector



Improved attitudes towards Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture



Business Objectives

To deliver our Strategic Objectives and wider government policy in the coming period, the Ulster-Scots Agency will build its work around three key business objectives of **Inspire**, **Empower**, and **Engage**. These are also underpinned by a shared Organisational Objective: **Improve**.

SO1: Inspire:



The Agency will identify, interpret and bring to life Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture through an integrated programme of promotional activities delivered in each year of the Corporate Plan period.

Inspiration is the starting point for interest, participation and pride. By identifying, interpreting, and enlivening Ulster-Scots language, heritage, and culture, we can spark curiosity and motivate individuals and communities to explore and connect with Ulster-Scots. Inspiration drives learning and engagement and encourages people to become part of a cultural community.

SO2: Empower



The Agency will equip individuals and groups with knowledge and skills to engage with Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture through a programme of directly delivered and grant funded learning initiatives delivered in each year of the Corporate Plan period.

Empowerment is about giving people the knowledge, tools and confidence to take part, helping them to become active participants, rather than remain passive observers. This builds resilience, capacity and ownership within the community. Empowered people multiply impact and create a lasting legacy that extends beyond direct interventions. This aligns with best practice in cultural development, which emphasises collaboration and shared leadership.

SO3: Engage



The Agency will support the development of the Ulster-Scots sector so that it is vibrant, effective and connected, internally and externally, through a programme of community support and engagement, delivered in each year of the Corporate Plan period.

Developing a cohesive Ulster-Scots sector that is able to provide effective, holistic support to Ulster-Scots linguistic, heritage and cultural communities in all their diversity; supported by local, national and international relationships and encouraging positive engagement with others demonstrates that the Ulster-Scots community is both inclusive and outward-looking. This is key to enhancing good relations and respect.

SO4: Improve



The Agency will work to continuously improve the systems and processes that underpin our delivery of services and stewardship of public money through the delivery of an annual improvement programme, delivered in each year of the Corporate Plan period.

Building the organisation's resilience, capacity and capability by investing in our workforce and providing them with the tools to do the job in a changing world will equip us to meet the challenges of delivering public services in a difficult operating environment.

Activities to achieve Business Objectives

SO1: Inspire

Activity	Timescale	Directorate
1.1 Promote Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture through linear and digital broadcasting.	Annually by December	Development
1.2 Promote Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture through publications.	Annually by December	Development
1.3 Promote Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture through Ulster-Scots events.	Annually by December	Development
1.4 Promote Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture through outreach events.	Annually by December	Development
1.5 Promote Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture through interpretive projects.	Annually by December	Development

SO2: Empower

Activity	Timescale	Directorate
2.1 Promote Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture through school-based learning.	Annually by December	Education and Language
2.2 Promote Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture through community-based learning.	Annually by December	Education and Language
2.3 Support the attainment of qualifications, accreditation or certification in Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture.	Annually by December	Education and Language
2.4 Promote Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture through community festivals	Annually by December	Education and Language
2.5 Promote Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture through summer schools.	Annually by December	Education and Language

Activities to achieve Business Objectives

SO3: Engage

Activity	Timescale	Directorate
3.1 Support the Ulster-Scots sector through a programme of core funding.	Annually by December	Development
3.2 Support the Ulster-Scots sector through a programme of Community Impact Projects.	Annually by December	Development
3.3 Support the Ulster-Sector through a programme of networking/partnership with Scots language/heritage communities.	Annually by December	Development
3.4 Support the Ulster-Sector through a programme of networking/partnership with Irish language/heritage communities.	Annually by December	Education and Language
3.5 Support the Ulster-Sector through a programme of networking/partnership with ethnic minority communities.	Annually by December	Education and Language

SO4: Improve

Activity	Timescale	Directorate
4.1 Enhance the work of the organisation through an annual financial systems improvement plan.	Annually by December	Corporate Services
4.2 Enhance the work of the organisation through an annual staff development plan.	Annually by December	Corporate Services
4.3 Enhance the work of the organisation through an annual monitoring and evaluation plan.	Annually by December	Education and Language

Measurable Performance Targets

A set of corporate Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) has been identified to capture and reflect the impact of the Ulster-Scots Agency in the coming period. These KPIs are readily measurable and meaningful for our organisation and key stakeholders. Year 1 of the corporate plan period (2026) will be used to establish the baseline against which future progress will be measured.

During the plan period, we will also work to develop our information gathering capability to take account of key metrics in relation to Programmes for Government in both jurisdictions.

SO1: Inspire

How will we measure this?

- # of people reached by activities promoting Ulster-Scots language
- # of people reached by activities promoting Ulster-Scots heritage and culture
- # of community organisations supported
- # of volunteers sustained or created
- # of schools supported
- % of service users reporting positive/improved attitude towards Ulster-Scots language
- % of service users reporting positive/improved attitude towards Ulster-Scots heritage/culture
- % of service users reporting positive experience of the Ulster-Scots Agency

SO2: Empower

How will we measure this?

- # of people participating in Ulster-Scots language learning programmes
- # of people participating in Ulster-Scots heritage and culture learning programmes
- # of people achieving Ulster-Scots language qualifications, accreditation or certification
- # of people achieving Ulster-Scots heritage and culture qualifications, accreditation or certification
- # of community organisations supported
- # of volunteers sustained or created
- # of schools supported
- % of service users reporting positive/improved attitude towards Ulster-Scots language
- % of service users reporting positive/improved attitude towards Ulster-Scots heritage/culture
- % of service users reporting positive experience of the Ulster-Scots Agency

SO3: Engage

How will we measure this?

- # of community organisations supported
- # of volunteers sustained or created
- # of schools supported
- % of service users reporting positive/improved attitude towards Ulster-Scots language
- % of service users reporting positive/improved attitude towards Ulster-Scots heritage/culture
- % of service users reporting positive experience of the Ulster-Scots Agency

SO4: Improve

How will we measure this?

- # of improvement targets met
- % of improvement targets met
- % of staff reporting positive difference as a result of improvement targets
- % of service users reporting positive difference as a result of improvement targets (where relevant)

Monitoring, Evaluation and Governance

Monitoring and Evaluation

The delivery of the Corporate Plan will be monitored by the Board, through monthly reports produced by the Senior Management Team and discussed at regular meetings. These reports will provide an update on progress against the delivery of the annual Business Plan as subsets of the Corporate Plan. Monthly reports also include an update on expenditure and variance against annual budgets.

In addition:

- The Ulster-Scots Agency carries out a continuous programme of post project evaluation for its activities.

- The Agency's CEO and Directors take part in quarterly monitoring meetings with senior officials from Sponsor Departments. At these meetings, business plan performance is reviewed by key achievements, areas of key risk are reviewed and audit recommendations are carefully tracked.

- The Agency provides regular progress reports and updates to language sectoral meetings of the North South Ministerial Council.



Governance

As a North-South body, the Ulster-Scots Agency adheres to a very specific governance model. Overall policy direction from Ministers, meeting through the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) informs the development of plans and work programmes. All plans and work programmes are presented to the Ulster-Scots Agency Board for approval and authorisation. Appropriate consultations take place as required with key stakeholders. The Ulster-Scots Agency is committed to the highest standards of governance.

The Agency's robust governance procedures cover:

- financial affairs;
- strategic planning and performance measurement;
- the management of security of information;
- codes of conduct;
- the management and development of staff; and
- the compliance with statutory legislative requirements.

The Ulster-Scots Agency is subject to external audit by the offices of the Comptrollers and Auditors General in Ireland and Northern Ireland. In addition, the Ulster-Scots Agency has an outsourced Internal Audit function that delivers an annual Internal Audit Plan approved by our Audit and Risk Committee. The Ulster-Scots Agency's audited Annual Accounts are published on our website.

Communicating the Plan

The Ulster-Scots Agency will develop a focused and integrated Communications Plan that will underpin our activity and support the operational delivery of this Corporate Plan. Our strategic approach will utilise a wide range of marketing channels and include proactive, sustained stakeholder engagement. Partnership working has been identified as a strategic enabler and will be a key feature of our communications strategy. Our activity will be supported by strong branding, clear messaging and communications campaigns and public relations activity aligned to delivering our strategic priorities and business outcomes.

Communications will be developed to make our funding clear for community and voluntary groups and will support 'on the ground' delivery of events and programmes across Ireland and Northern Ireland through use of traditional, digital and social media channels. We will deliver specific campaigns and messaging to create awareness of the specific events and programming we offer.

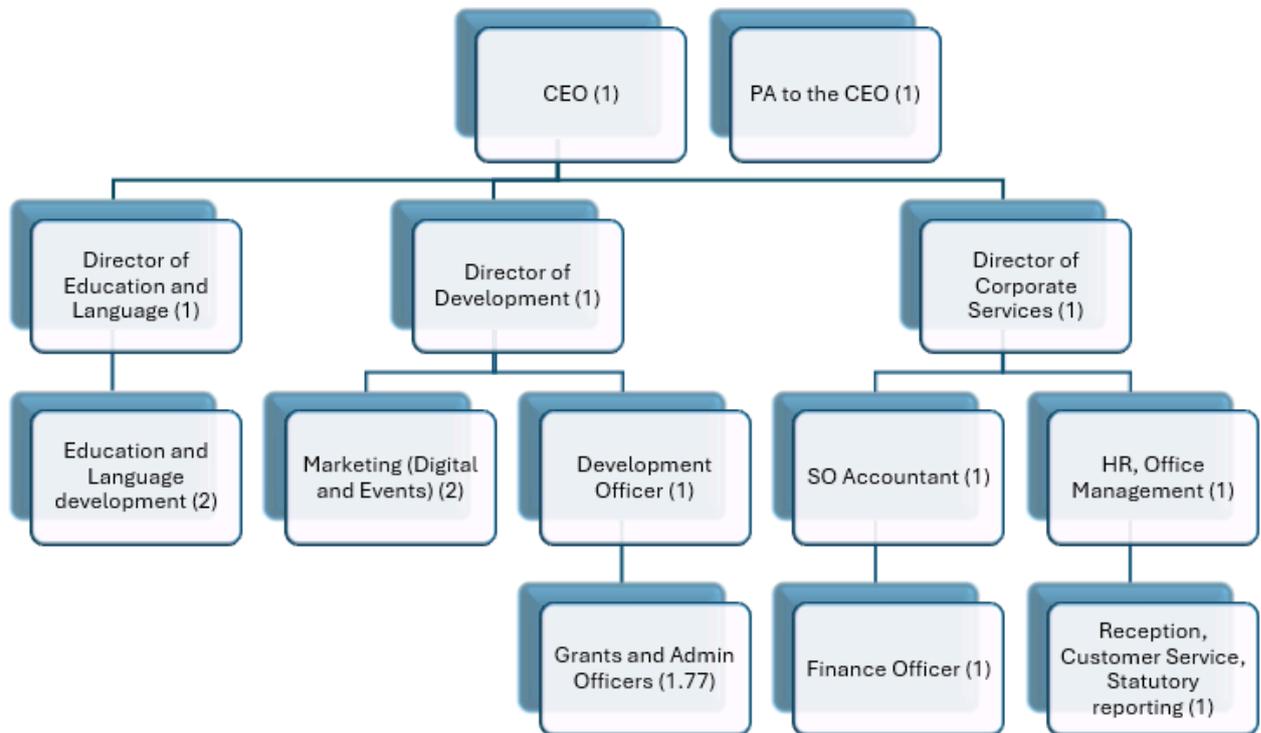
Campaigns will have a clear 'call to action' that encourages participation among the community and stakeholders across our sector.

The Corporate Plan will be published on our website and supported by focused promotional activity and stakeholder engagement throughout the period of the plan. The staff and Board have been involved in the strategic review and corporate planning process and the final plan will be shared at all levels of the organisation. Our mission, vision and values will be displayed prominently within our offices and staff will be supported to clearly understand how their work contributes to the achievement of our objectives and targets.

While our Corporate Plan will guide our operations, engagement with stakeholders and policy focus for the period 2026 – 2028, the Ulster-Scots Agency will keep our approach under review, to ensure we remain agile and responsive to our evolving operating environment and business n



OUR ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE



Note: The number in brackets denote the Full Time Equivalent complement of the Agency (15.77 FTE)