



## **Business Plan 2024**

**Contents**

1. Introduction .....3

2. Review of Progress against 2023 Business Plan .....5

3. Proposed 2024 Budget .....8

4. Strategic Priorities for 2024 ..... 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 2024 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 2023 Business Plan

Despite extremely difficult economic circumstances, 2023 was another 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**

Ulster-Scots was promoted at a range of high-profile events including the Balmoral Show, where we received a visit from the NI Secretary of State, Chris Heaton-Harris MP; Ballyclare May Fair, the Presbyterian General Assembly and Spinning Yarns Festival in partnership with public and third sector partners.

The Agency 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. The Gamble Library celebrated its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary during 2023, with the Ulster-Scots Agency supporting the publication of an anniversary booklet, as well as conservation works across a number of key collections.

The contribution of individual Ulster-Scots to wider society was also recognised through the unveiling of Ulster History Circle blue plaques in Larne, Co Antrim and Derrylin, Co Fermanagh to honour the author Dr James McHenry and the Danish resistance leader Monica de Wichfeld (nee Massy-Beresford).

Progress continued in building interest in Ulster-Scots heritage in Donegal, Cavan and Monaghan. Our annual Ulster-Scots Heritage Day in Raphoe attracted over 1500 participants. Community showcase events were supported in 10 local venues and a new exhibition entitled 'Resolute People', developed by the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland with a focus on the border counties, went on tour in the border counties with support from the Agency.

Interest in our school programmes continued to be strong, with more than 50 introductory workshops delivered; 30 schools completing 8-week After School Clubs; and 5 schools successfully completing their Ulster-Scots Flagship School Award. A total of 65 schools were supported with music and dance tuition to the end of June, while the new school year saw commencement of a new community-led approach to tuition, which will see a further increase in the number of schools supported.

Ulster-Scots Language Week continued to grow with a programme catering for people of all ages delivered across the nine counties of Ulster, delivered in partnership with councils and local communities including language workshops, talks, book launches, writing competitions and lectures. Further progress was made in relation to the Ulster-Scots language with the establishment of a new advisory panel of academic experts and a start made on developing a new language action plan.

## **Empower**

The Agency 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 across Ulster to access funds, as well as delivering a wide range of cultural outputs.

Thanks to additional resource secured from our Southern sponsor department, the Agency was able to support 139 groups across Ulster with energy support grants to help them cope with spiking energy costs.

A new pilot grant programme, also supported by the Irish government, saw €100,000 awarded to Ulster-Scots marching bands in Donegal, Monaghan and Cavan to build confidence and musicality through investment in instruments and uniforms.

A total of 91 groups across Ulster were able to avail of support through the Agency's Small Events grant, including around 40 groups who delivered Ulster-Scots events to celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III. The Agency also delivered a high-profile community event at Parliament Buildings, Stormont to mark the occasion, which was supported by a wide spectrum of bands, dance groups and community groups from the Ulster-Scots community.

The Maiden City Festival in Londonderry, which was celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, was among 12 community festivals supported across Ulster. The Maiden City Festival received additional support to deliver a programme of community roadshows in the run-up to the festival, while the North West also benefited from funding for the 'Not so Serious Burns' programme delivered by Bready Ulster-Scots and a highland dance championship delivered by Sollus School of Highland Dance.

Over 200 applications were received for music and dance tuition grants in the community, an increase of 30% on 2022. The Agency was able to allocate some additional funds, allowing us to fund 158 projects, the highest number in some years, but it was still some way short of the level of demand. Support was also provided for 22 Ulster-Scots Summer Schools, which returned to the levels seen before the pandemic.

Exciting new partnerships with the Girls Brigade NI, Scouts NI and Girlguiding Ulster saw the development of new learning tools to promote knowledge of Ulster-Scots within the work of those organisations, which by the end of the year saw resources distributed to around 50 local groups.

## Engage

The year saw one of the Agency's highest-profile projects in recent times, when an exhibition featuring an original American Declaration of Independence, placing the document in its Ulster-Scots context, was delivered in partnership with the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland to coincide with events to mark the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Belfast Agreement. The exhibition was opened by Joe Kennedy III, the US President's Special Economic Envoy to Northern Ireland and seen by over 3,000 visitors between April and August.

The Agency has since sought to build on that success by working with a range of partners to stimulate awareness of the opportunities presented by the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of American Independence, which will take place in 2026. The year finished with a highly successful visit to Boston, USA, to celebrate the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Boston Tea Party and lay the foundations for USA related work over the next three years.

This year for the first time the Agency also worked with the Canadian Honorary Consul for Northern Ireland, Ken Brundle, to support his annual Canada Day event, which took place in Belfast on 1st July and was open to Northern Ireland's more than 12,000 Canadian citizens.

A Memorial Lecture in honour of Andrew Bonar Law, the first Ulster-Scot to serve as UK Prime Minister, delivered by Lord Bew and held at the Palace of Westminster, attracted a large attendance including Northern Ireland Office Minister Lord Caine and several members of the Bonar Law family.

### 3. Proposed 2024 Budget

This business plan is based on a baseline budget of £2,666,706. The budget has been profiled against our key work areas as follows:

	2023 Budget (£)	2024 Proposed Budget (£)
Serving the Community	911,150	925,994
Partnership Working	79,300	56,060
Marketing	197,470	201,619
Education	211,000	172,500
Providing a First Class Service	1,218,556	1,122,771
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,617,476</b>	<b>2,617,476</b>
Additional Pension Contributions DFC	61,431	49,230
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>2,678,907</b>	<b>2,666,706</b>
DFC	2,024,538	2,012,337
DTCAGSM	654,369	654,369
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>2,678,907</b>	<b>2,666,706</b>

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; 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; 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 2024

During 2024 the Ulster-Scots Agency will work to address the challenging situation of increasing demand from local communities and increasing demand from statutory partners which has been occasioned by a changing political environment that has promised much for Ulster-Scots but has so far delivered nothing, while planning once again for a stagnating budget.

We will seek to maintain the capacity at the core of the Ulster-Scots sector, while seeking to make additions where resources allow. We will build on the success of existing initiatives and make the most of existing resources, while seeking to bring forward strategically important initiatives. This will include developing a business case for an Ulster-Scots hub in Belfast that will maximise opportunities for Ulster-Scots while addressing the accommodation needs of key sectoral organisations. Where possible, we will seek to make the most of opportunities to lever partnership funding and attract resources from sources such as the Shared Island Initiative and the Peace Plus programme.

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.

Our annual calendar will continue to be built around key staples like Burns Week in January and Ulster-Scotch Leid Week in November. We will also seek to make progress in developing Ulster-Scots Day in May, where this year we will focus on 25 years of the Ulster-Scots Agency, as an opportunity to chart the progress of the Ulster-Scots sector in the last quarter of a century.

We will deliver programmes of activity in relation to three important anniversaries in 2024, the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of D-Day, which will provide an opportunity to look at the part played by Ulster-Scots and our diaspora in the Second World War; and the Bicentenary of the birth of William Thomson, Lord Kelvin, the Ulster-Scot who was the foremost scientist of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, which will provide an opportunity to increase our engagement with schools through STEM subjects; and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of John Hewitt's seminal book *The Weaver Poets*, which will provide an opportunity to raise awareness of this important aspect of Ulster-Scots literary tradition.

We will continue to build on the success of our Ulster-Scots Heritage Day event in Raphoe and work to develop a similar event at a site in Monaghan, building on our recent successful intervention with bands in the area. This will be an important development in Monaghan as we approach the opening of the new Peace Campus in Monaghan town.

### **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.

In the Spring, we will deliver our first annual Pipe Majors Masterclass in conjunction with Richard Parkes MBE of the Field Marshall Montgomery Pipe Band. 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 for young people. We will also seek to enrich our cultural offering by developing a music book to support our tuition programmes in school and community settings; and new learning resources to support our summer school programme.

We will make progress with the development of a Transition Year (TY) Programme for use in schools in Ireland, which has been resourced through additional resources from the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sports and Media. Subject to the availability of resources, we will seek to build on the success of the pilot grant programme to support instruments and uniforms for Ulster-Scots bands in Donegal, Cavan and Monaghan by delivering a second funding round under the scheme as well as developing a more cohesive and developmental approach to support for the Ulster-Scots bands tradition in the border counties.

### **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 reach out to other cultural minority communities in Northern Ireland to raise awareness of Ulster-Scots and promote mutual respect. In particular, this will involve exploring opportunities with the Chinese community, the Indian community and the Jewish community.

We will continue to work with a range of partners to develop opportunities in connection with the forthcoming 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the American Declaration of Independence and the various historic anniversaries that will precede it over the next two years.

The work of building positive relations across the full range of language, heritage and culture that we share with Scotland will continue in 2024.

**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 2024	Director of Development	<b>CPSA1.13</b>
1.2	Deliver a programme of activity in relation to key dates in the Ulster-Scots cultural calendar	1 programme	December 2024	J Purse	<b>CPSA1.14</b>
1.3	Support a programme of activity around Ulster-Scots Day	1 programme	May 2024	G McCullough	<b>CPSA1.2</b>
1.4	Develop a promotional programme for Ulster-Scots around national and international awareness days	1 programme	December 2024	J Purse / G McCullough	<b>CPSA1.14</b>
1.5	Support a programme of large-scale heritage projects promoting aspects of Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture	1 programme	December 2024	Director of Development	<b>CPSA1.16</b>
1.6	Support a programme of Ulster-Scots promotional exhibitions	1 programme	December 2024	G McCullough	<b>CPSA1.3</b>
1.7	Deliver a programme of Ulster-Scots promotional events	1 programme	December 2024	G McCullough	<b>CPSA1.4</b>
1.8	Deliver a programme of Blue Plaques around Ulster celebrating significant Ulster-Scots figures	1 programme	December 2024	G McCullough	<b>CPSA1</b>

	Activity	Measure	Target Date	Responsible Officer	Corp. Plan Target
1.9	Deliver an annual programme of printed promotional activity	1 programme	December 2024	G McCullough	CPSA1
1.10	Deliver an annual programme of online promotional activity	1 programme	December 2024	J Purse	CPSA1.1
1.11	Deliver an annual programme of radio advertising	1 programme	December 2024	J Purse	CPSA1
1.12	Support primary schools via the Ulster-Scots Flagship School Programme	5 new Flagship School awards	December 2024	G Blair	CPSA1.9
1.13	Deliver a North/South School Twinning Programme	1 programme	December 2024	G Blair	CPSA2.14
1.14	Deliver a programme of activity in relation to the Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund	1 programme	December 2024	I Crozier	CPSA1
1.15	Deliver a programme of Ulster-Scots Afterschool Clubs in Primary Schools	1 programme	December 2024	G Blair	CPSA2.12
1.16	Deliver a programme of educational workshops for schools	1 programme	December 2024	G Blair	CPSA2.13
1.17	Support a programme of Ulster-Scots music/dance tuition in schools	1 programme	December 2024	D Reaney	CPSA2.16
1.18	Support a programme of partnerships for the preservation and/or promotion of Ulster-Scots heritage assets	1 programme	December 2024	Director of Development	CPSA1.16

	Activity	Measure	Target Date	Responsible Officer	Corp. Plan Target
1.19	Deliver a programme of activity in relation to Kelvin 200.	1 programme	December 2024	I Crozier	<b>CPSA1</b>
1.20	Deliver a programme of activity in relation to D Day 80.	1 programme	December 2024	I Crozier	<b>CPSA1</b>
1.21	Deliver a programme of activity in relation to the Weaver Poets.	1 programme	December 2024	I Crozier	<b>CPSA1</b>
1.22	Develop an A Level RE Essay Competition in partnership with Union Theological College.	1 competition	December 2024	I Crozier	<b>CPSA1</b>

## 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 2024	D Reaney	CPSA2
2.2 Deliver Community Impact Grant Programme	1 programme	December 2024	D Reaney	CPSA2.4
2.3 Deliver Music & Dance Tuition Grant Programme	1 programme	December 2024	D Reaney	CPSA2.1
2.4 Deliver Community Festivals Grant Programme	1 programme	December 2024	D Reaney	CPSA2.3
2.5 Deliver Summer School Grant Programme	1 programme	December 2024	D Reaney	CPSA2
2.6 Deliver FAS Other Grant Programme	1 programme	December 2024	D Reaney	CPSA2
2.7 Deliver Small Events Grant Programme	1 programme	December 2024	D Reaney	CPSA2
2.8 Develop an Ulster-Scots music book to support tuition programmes.	1 music book	December 2024	J Barr	CPSA2.1
2.9 Develop a learning resource to support summer schools.	1 learning resource	June 2024	J Barr	CPSA2
2.10 Deliver a programme of talks on Ulster-Scots language to schools and community groups.	1 programme	December 2024	G Blair	CPSA2.6
2.11 Support the promotion of Ulster-Scots through a programme of community radio broadcasting	2 broadcast periods	December 2024	D Reaney	CPSA2.9

	Activity	Measures	Target Date	Responsible Officer	Corp. Plan Target
2.12	Deliver 2 heritage projects in ROI border counties	2 projects	December 2024	D Reaney	CPSA1
2.13	Support 400 learners in achieving recognised qualifications in music and dance	400 accredited learners	December 2024	J Barr	CPSA2
2.14	Deliver a programme of events to mark the achievements of Ulster-Scots learners	1 programme	December 2024	J Barr	CPSA2
2.15	Support delivery of the Richard Parkes MBE Pipe Majors Masterclass	1 masterclass	April 2024	J Barr	CPSA2
2.16	Deliver Ingenious Ulster learning resource	1 resource	June 2024	J Barr	CPSA2
2.17	Deliver 2 language development projects.	2 projects	December 2024	I Crozier	CPSA2



### Additional Targets in respect of 2021 Baseline Budget Uplift

	Activity	Measures	Target Date	Responsible Officer	Corp. Plan Target
2.18	Develop and implement an annual Research Programme	1 programme	December 2024	Policy & Research Team	n/a
2.19	Develop and implement an annual Consultation Plan	1 programme	December 2024	Policy & Research Team	n/a
2.20	Develop and implement an annual Advice and Guidance programme	1 programme	December 2024	Policy & Research Team	n/a
2.21	Develop and implement an annual Language Action Plan	1 plan	December 2024	Language Development Officer	n/a
2.22	Develop and implement an annual Youth Development Plan	1 plan	December 2024	Youth Development Officer	CPSA2
2.23	Deliver Youth Grants Programme	1 grant programme	December 2024	J Barr	CPSA2
2.24	Increase Community Impact Programme by 25%	1 new project funded	July 2024	D Reaney	CPSA2.4

**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 2024	I Crozier	<b>CPSA3.6</b>
3.2 Deliver a series of projects in relation to the Border Reivers.	2 projects	December 2024	I Crozier	<b>CPSA3</b>
3.3 Deliver 2 USA focused outreach projects.	2 projects	December 2024	I Crozier	<b>CPSA3.4</b>
3.4 Deliver an East/West School Twinning Programme.	1 Programme	December 2024	G Blair	<b>CPSA3.1</b>
3.5 Support a programme of East/West relationship building.	1 programme	December 2024	I Crozier	<b>CPSA3.3</b>
3.6 Deliver a programme of activity in relation to the Ulster-Scots diaspora in the Commonwealth.	1 Programme	December 2024	Director of Development	<b>CPSA3</b>

## **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.