

NATIONAL FILM AND TELEVISION SCHOOL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS HELD ON TUESDAY 5th DECEMBER 2024 AT NFTS BEACONSFIELD.

Sophie Turner Laing (Chair), Paloma Baeza, Julian Bellamy, Chris Bird, Paul Clark, Polly Cochrane, Geoffrey Crossick, Scott Forrest, Oli Hyatt, Eloise Jenninger, John Lee, Andrew Macdonald, Pukar Mehta, Laurent Samama, Caroline Silver, and Jon Wardle. Hilary Strong and Charlotte Moore joined by Zoom.

In attendance: Stephen Louis, Trevor Hall, Eleanor Wheal, Gillian Carr, Ijeoma Akigwe

Clerk: Chris Wensley by Zoom.

Apologies: Cécile Frot-Coutaz, Patrick Fuller, Andy Harries, Ollie Madden, Adil Ray, Sue Vertue.

Declaration of Personal Interests: There were no new declarations.

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting

1.1 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the previous Board of Governors Meeting held on 24th September 2024 were approved as an accurate record.

1.2 Actions.

1.2.1 Management to report on progress with communication initiatives.

This was dealt with under 2.2.

1.2.2 Management to present a review of scholarship strategy.

This had been carried forward to the February meeting.

It was noted that all other actions had been completed,

ACTION: Management to present a review of scholarship strategy.

1.3 Matters Arising

It was reported that there had been a few early applications for the Humanitarian Scholarships, and the School was liaising with the British Council to raise awareness of the scholarships.

There were no other matters arising.

2. Strategy

2.1 Expanding the Beaconsfield Campus

Jon Wardle provided an update about ongoing negotiations to develop the NFTS Beaconsfield campus, including confirmation of initial government funding, the contract to purchase the building and the building specification. He described progress with the associated fundraising, and explained the targets, deadlines and next steps.

The Board discussed fundraising and the importance of persuading the key potential funders to complete, 'pour encourager les autres'. It was noted that the DCMS target was for the School to raise the initial £5 million by June 2025, and that this would require a major effort.

Sophie Turner Laing asked all members if they had any contacts with the Hans and Julia Rausing Trust who do not take unsolicited approaches.

The Board noted the paper.

2.2 Update on Marketing and Communication Strategy

Ijeoma Akigwe reported that the Board had authorized her to invite PR agencies to pitch for an account to help raise the profile of the School with media organisations and the public. She explained that from those companies that pitched, Organic had been selected as preferred supplier. She described the company's strengths and outlined what it would be expected to achieve during an initial one-year contract. She also explained that she would be drawing up KPIs with them.

It was noted that the Organic would produce proposals for events and campaigns, but that more budget might be needed to deliver some of them.

The Board thanked Polly Cochrane for her help developing the marketing strategy.

RESOLVED: To approve the appointment of Organic to a one-year contract starting 1st January 2025.

3. Updates from Committees

3.1 Minutes from Audit Committee.

Caroline Silver presented the minutes of the meeting held on 12th November 2024.

3.2 Minutes from F&GP Committee.

Laurent Samama presented the minutes of the meeting held on 11th November 2024.

3.3 Report from Governance, Appointments and Remuneration Committee (GAR)

Sophie Turner Laing reported on recent meetings of the Governance, Appointments and Remuneration Committee. She described the activities of the Committee, and advised that a priority remained Board diversity, especially ethnicity and disability. Finally, she outlined the process for determining senior staff salaries.

4. Honorary Fellowship

4.1 NFTS Fellow 2025

Jon Wardle presented the recommendation from the Fellowship sub-committee, set up by the GAR Committee, that the Fellowship be awarded to documentary broadcaster Louis Theroux.

Charlotte Moore added that Theroux was involved in a range of activity beyond presenting and interviewing such as mentoring, researching and producing

The Board agreed that he was a worthy recipient of the award and warmly endorsed the recommendation.

There was discussion about the number of ethnically diverse names on the shortlist, and it was agreed this was a priority for next year.

Finally, it was suggested that there should be a separate Craft category of fellowship award, although others favoured a single category but with two awards when appropriate

RESOLVED: To award the NFTS Fellowship to Louis Theroux.

ACTION: GAR to discuss how to ensure excellence in the craft of film and TV is appropriately recognised in the award of NFTS Fellow.

5. Reports

5.1 Director's Report

The Director reported on his activities from September to November 2024. He drew particular attention to the Board Strategy Afternoon in October and provided a detailed checklist of progress against the actions agreed at the meeting, including cyber security, virtual production and scholarships; good progress with current student recruitment; plans for the 2025 Gala; update on new and renewing funding agreements and a planned academic governance review.

He also reported on progress made to date towards achieving the School's vision, objectives and goals for the year 2024/25.

5.2 Finance Director's Report

Trevor Hall updated the Committee on the School's financial performance for the two months to 30th September 2024 which were marginally behind budget. The School had modelled the impact of the rise in Employer's National Insurance announced in the October 2024 budget and would provide a budget forecast update at the next meeting.
The Board noted the financial performance.

5.3 Student Union Report

Since this was her last meeting, Eloise Jenninger presented an overview of the year in terms of the activities that the SU had organised or supported, including the Student Action Group designed to mediate conflicts in the student body; the establishment of three Humanitarian Scholarships for applicants from conflict zones; and the organisation of a range of social activities for students. Looking ahead, the planned focus was on mental health and wellbeing, and climate initiatives.

Geoff Crossick suggested a mechanism for the outgoing president to advise the School of training that might be beneficial for an incoming president. Paul Clarke asked about mental health support for students, and Jon Wardle said he was confident there was good provision and agreed to report back at a future meeting.

The Board warmly thanked Eloise for her contributions to the Board and wished her well in her future career.

5.4 Curriculum and Short Course Report

Jon Wardle updated the Board on key curriculum activity since the last meeting, including updates on short courses, activity in the Hubs, the operation of the full-time curriculum, development of new courses, academic standards, complaints and appeals, partnerships and recruitment.
The Board noted the Curriculum and Short Course report.

5.5 Apprenticeships Update

Eleanor Wheal reported that the School's apprenticeship programmes were progressing well and she anticipated growth in apprenticeship numbers for 2025/26.

Sophie Turner Laing queried why the School seemed only to consider apprenticeships in scripted production.

The Committee noted the report.

5.6 BECTU Collective Agreement

Jon Wardle and Gillian Carr presented the proposed changes to the BECTU collective agreement reached after consultation with BECTU Union representatives in 2024. Changes included details about maternity pay, redundancy payments and sick pay benefits.

After discussion, the Board agreed the paper.

RESOLVED: To approve the revised BECTU Collective Agreement Consultation.

5.7 OfS Annual Accountability and Prevent Return including:

Trevor Hall presented the 2024 OFS Annual Accountability (including the annual financial statements and OFS Annual Financial Return) and Prevent returns.

Financial Statements:

The financial statements, in conjunction with the Letter of Representation to the auditors and BDO's Audit Completion Report, had been reviewed by Audit Committee and F&GP and were recommended to the Board for approval.

The external auditors (BDO) intended to issue an unmodified audit opinion (aka a clean audit report) and no points for Board / Management were raised in their Audit Completion Report (seventh year in succession).

OfS Annual Financial Return:

The Board had delegated the review and approval of the draft OfS Annual Financial Return and commentary to F&GP to meet the 2 December 2024 submission deadline.

After due scrutiny, F&GP had authorised the School Director to submit the Annual Financial Return and commentary on behalf of the Board.

OFS Annual PREVENT Return:

The Board had delegated the review and approval of the 2024 Prevent Return to Audit Committee to meet the 2 December 2024 submission deadline.

After due scrutiny, the Chair of Audit Committee had signed the 2024 Prevent Return on behalf of the Board.

The Board thanked Trevor Hall and asked him to pass on its congratulations to the Finance team for an excellent outcome.

RESOLVED:

- **Note the submission of the 2024 OfS Annual Financial and Prevent Return**
- **Authorise the Chair and Director of the School to sign the financial statements and letter of representation for the year ended 31 July 2024, on behalf of the Board**

5.8 Annual Quality Assurance Evaluation Report

In order to assist the Board with its evaluation of academic risk, Geoff Crossick reported on the annual extraordinary meeting of the Academic Standards Committee meeting and the Quality Assurance Evaluation Report which had been discussed. He also directed members to the detailed minutes of the meeting. He explained that he had chaired the meeting with other Board members in attendance, and, following detailed consideration of the report, it had been agreed by the Board members present that assurances could be provided to the Board in respect of the student academic experience, student outcomes and the standards of the School's awards. He advised that Board members attending had been impressed by the immediate actions taken by the School to address any problems identified and by the quality of the external examiners' reports.

5.9 Annual Audit Committee Report

Trevor Hall presented the 2024 Audit Committee Annual Report to provide assurance to the Board on the adequacy and effectiveness of the School's arrangements for:

- Risk management, control and governance;
- Value for money;
- The management and quality assurance of data; and
- Sustainability.

5.10 Modern Slavery Statement 2024

Trevor Hall presented the School's updated Modern Slavery Statement to be published on the School's website

RESOLVED: To approve the updated NFTS Modern Slavery Statement.

5. Board Briefing

Will Mansell, a 2nd Year Production Design Student, described the programme and provided examples of work which had been produced.

The Board thanked him for a very interesting presentation.

6. Date of Next Meeting:

This was confirmed as Tuesday 25th February 2025 at 10.30am at the NFTS, Beaconsfield.