

NATIONAL FILM AND TELEVISION SCHOOL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS HELD ON TUESDAY 27th FEBRUARY 2024 AT NFTS BEACONSFIELD.

Present: Sophie Turner Laing (Chair), Polly Cochrane, Geoffrey Crossick, Phil Edgar-Jones, Scott Forrest, Oli Hyatt, Eloise Jenninger, John Lee, Andrew Macdonald, Pukar Mehta, Charlotte Moore, Laurent Samama, Bal Samra, Hilary Strong (Zoom), Jon Wardle, Miranda Wayland.

Apologies: Caroline Hollick, Julian Bellamy, Ollie Madden, Patrick Fuller, Stephen Louis, Caroline Silver, Adil Ray.

In attendance: Sue Vertue (Zoom), Trevor Hall, Mark Readman, Eleanor Wheal, Gillian Carr, Ijeoma Akigwe

Clerk: Chris Wensley

Declaration of Personal Interests: With reference to item 4.2, Trevor Hall declared an interest as the employer nominee trustee of the NFTS Pension Scheme. Pukar Mehta reported that for a short period he had been a visiting lecturer at the School.

The Chair welcomed Eloise Jenninger, the SU President, to her first meeting and noted that Julian Bellamy from ITV had joined the Board.

She also reported on the very successful NFTS Graduation ceremony and show and congratulated those involved.

She thanked members for completing the Board assessment survey and advised that it would be considered by GAR and a report brought to the June Board meeting.

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting

1.1 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the previous Board of Governors Meeting held on 28th November 2023 were approved as an accurate record.

1.2 Actions.

It was noted that the following actions were on the agenda:

- *Management to update the Board on the pension deficit at a 2024 meeting.*
- *Management to produce a business case for the expansion of the Beaconsfield campus.*
- *Management to present an implementation plan for the Games Strategy to the June Board meeting for final approval.*

It was noted that the following actions had been completed:

- *Management to seek advice from relevant Board members on the review of business continuity.*
- *Chris Wensley to circulate to members the process and criteria for the award of the NFTS Fellowship when agreed by GAR.*
- *Management to send an invitation to Board members inviting attendance at the next extraordinary meeting of the Academic Standards Committee meeting.*

It was noted that the following actions were carried forward to the June meeting:

- *Management to consider how best to gather, present and use application data, and report to a future meeting.*

1.3 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

2. Strategy

2.1 Expanding the Beaconsfield Campus

Jon Wardle provided an update about ongoing negotiations to develop the NFTS Beaconsfield campus.

After extensive discussion about the nature and scope of the project and the risks involved in the requirement to fundraise additional capital, the Board approved further negotiations to progress the project.

RESOLVED: Management to continue to develop the project and the associated fund raising.

3. Updates from Committees

3.1 Minutes from Audit Committee.

On behalf of Caroline Silver, Pukar Mehta presented the minutes of the meeting held on 13th February 2024. He drew attention to the continuing 'substantial assurances' achieved by the School in recent internal audits, and the Board congratulated those involved. He also advised that the Audit Committee had noted concerns about a joint meeting with the F&GP Committee and that accordingly a paper would be brought to a future Board meeting.

3.2 Minutes from F&GP Committee.

Laurent Samama presented the minutes of the meeting held on 16th February 2024. He advised that the F&GP had discussed campus expansion plans and supported the initiative. He also drew attention to the Committee's discussion on the BECTU agreement which was due for renewal.

Pukar Mehta asked about the School's Environmental sustainability plan and particularly the two remaining objectives that required further work, and whether there were lessons from the industry that could be learnt. Trevor Hall updated the Board on progress on these two remaining objectives..

4. Reports

4.1 Director's Report

The Director reported on his activities since the last meeting. He drew particular attention to the announcement of the successful Crown auction to fund future scholarships; NFTS successes at the recent BAFTA awards; progress with the CoStar project and related issues with the Pinewood development; plans for the 2024 Gala; and a visit to the School by the Prime Minister.

He also reported on progress made to date towards achieving the School's vision, objectives and goals for the year 2023/24.

Geoffrey Crossick welcomed the Crown scholarships, and stressed that others should be sought, pointing out that many international film schools and conservatoires offered scholarships to almost all their students to attract the best talent available.

Miranda Wayland asked about an overarching comms strategy to pull together all the School's successes. This was supported by other Board members

ACTION: Ijeoma Akigwe to produce for the June Board a proactive NFTS communications strategy to grow the visibility of the School.

4.2 Pensions Update

Trevor Hall updated the Committee on the School's closed defined benefits pension scheme. He reported that, with the Scheme approaching maturity, the trustees had sought to 'de-risk' the investment portfolio by slowly rebalancing the portfolio and would then seek to pass the liability to an insurance company and be 'bought out'. The Board welcomed the progress made in this area.

4.3 Finance Director's Report

Trevor Hall updated the Committee on the School's financial activities and deliverables since the last meeting. He confirmed that performance was ahead of budget, thanks mainly to the performance of the national and regional hubs, and that the School's finances remained robust and sustainable. He reported that the decision to fix the tariff for gas before the recent big increases had been effective, and the Board congratulated him on the decision. He also presented the proposed diploma and certificate fees for 2024/5.

The Board noted the report.

RESOLVED: To approve the proposed fees for diplomas and certificates for 2024/25

4.4 Student Union Report

Eloise Jenner reported on activities that the SU had organised or supported. She stressed that her focus was to ensure that the SU remained a positive and welcoming force at the School, fostering inclusivity and social bonds, and nurturing a healthy and warm culture. She also outlined proposed SU activities, including with international students and local community groups.

She also explained that a small group of students were organising protests, not as part of the SU, about the situation in the Middle East, and she was anxious that all views should be heard so that no student felt marginalised or threatened.

The Board agreed and felt that this was also a difficult situation for the School, protecting the right to protest and freedom of speech but 'within boundaries'.

Charlotte Moore described how the BBC had defused a similar situation by encouraging dialogue between different groups, including the making of short personal films.

Sophie Turner Laing asked the SU to consider how to facilitate more dialogue between governors and students.

The Board thanked Eloise for her report.

4.5 Curriculum and Short Course Report (incl Student Survey)

Mark Readman updated the Board on key curriculum activity since the last meeting, including updates on short courses, the operation of the full-time curriculum, development of new courses, academic standards, complaints and appeals, partnerships and recruitment. He drew particular attention to the new editing pathway, activity in the hubs, and the newly-agreed guiding principles for the use of AI in School production work. He also reported on the 2023 Annual Student Survey which had an overall satisfaction level of 82%, a very good result in the broader context of the HE sector.

The Board noted the report.

4.6 Apprenticeships

Eleanor Wheal reported that the School's first apprenticeship programme had commenced, and she advised of actions that were being undertaken to support the delivery of the programme as well as preparations for an Ofsted monitoring visit.

She also reported on discussions concerning apprenticeship training with the School's other industry partners. She stressed the importance of governors completing the online Safeguarding training.

4.7 Annual Diversity Report - Students

Eleanor Wheal presented Information about the demographics of the 2023 student intake, showing trends across the previous three years in respect of ethnicity, gender, disability status and socio-economic background. She also presented information that the School is required to publish under its Public Sector Equality Duty.

Geoffrey Crossick asked for clarification about the relative changes to the ethnic diversity of MA students between UK and international students, and Eleanor Wheal agreed to check.

The Board also noted the importance of scholarships in recruiting more students from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

4.8 Annual Diversity Report – Staff.

Gillian Carr presented the annual report on staff diversity and inclusion, and advised that the work of School's Anti-Discrimination Group had been valuable in helping the School make progress towards targets.

Sophie Turner Laing advised that the Board could help HoDs seeking more diverse applicants, and Gillian Carr agreed to remind them.

4.9 Safeguarding and Prevent

Eleanor Wheal made a detailed presentation to the Board on Prevent.

She explained that the governing body needed to give assurance to the OfS that the School was meeting its Prevent duty. She also explained that the Audit Committee monitored this on behalf of the Board, and she reminded the Board of the key principles and the ways the School was delivering the actions required.

5. Date of Next Meeting:

This was confirmed as Tuesday 18th June 2024 at 10.30am at the NFTS, Beaconsfield.