

## NATIONAL FILM AND TELEVISION SCHOOL

### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS HELD ON TUESDAY 20<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2023 AT NFTS BEACONSFIELD.**

**Present:** Sophie Turner Laing (Chair), Ian Lewis (Deputy Chair), Joe Bradbury-Walters, Geoffrey Crossick, Phil Edgar-Jones, Scott Forrest, Patrick Fuller, Sara Geater, Oli Hyatt, Andrew Macdonald, Ollie Madden, Pukar Mehta, Charlotte Moore, Max Pederson, Adil Ray, Laurent Samama, Hilary Strong, Jon Wardle, Miranda Wayland, with Bal Samra and Mary Stiasny by Zoom.

Apologies: Caroline Hollick, Stephen Louis.

In attendance: Sue Vertue, Gillian Carr, Trevor Hall, Mark Readman, Eleanor Wheal.

Clerk: Chris Wensley by Zoom

**Declaration of Personal Interests:** Joe Bradbury-Walters, staff rep, is a beneficiary of the proposed pay award to be discussed under agenda item 3.2 and, along with Max Pederson, the SU rep, would be invited to leave the meeting for that item.

The Chair welcomed Scott Forrest attending his first 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 21<sup>st</sup> February 2023 were approved as an accurate record.

##### 1.2 Actions.

There were no actions.

##### 1.3 Matters Arising

1.3.1 Jon Wardle confirmed that the new Alumni and Talent Manager had been appointed.

#### **2. Reports and Updates.**

##### 2.1 Student Union Report

Max Pederson reported a range of activities that the SU had organised or supported, and outlined a series of events that were planned for the next few months. He added that a new SU society for students with disabilities had been established. Finally, he advised of the newly-elected student reps. The Board thanked Max for his report.

##### 2.2 Director's Report

The Director reported on his activities since February 2023. He drew particular attention to the successful CoStar application which would considerably enhance the School's R&D profile.

He also reported on a significant number of NFTS BAFTA nominations; a visit by the Secretary of State for the DCMS; key partner funding agreement renewals; student recruitment; progress with arrangements for that evening's 2023 Gala; and new appointments of a Talent and Alumni Manager, a Disability Advocate, and an Apprenticeship Development Manager.

The Board congratulated Management on winning the Co-Star contract with its partners.

### 2.3 Finance Director's Report

Trevor Hall updated the Committee on the financial performance since the last meeting, and confirmed that the School was performing better than budget, and that the reforecast was in line with expectations. He also outlined the current position with bank investments, and advised of a new contract to provide cleaning services; the replacement of the lighting rigging in the School's TV studio; and a donation to the NFTS Foundation to set up an endowment to fund an annual scholarship to support a student on MA Marketing, Distribution, Sales & Exhibitions.

Geoff Crossick asked about the implications for the NFTS of the new government directive which would not allow PG students to bring dependents to the UK, and Jon Wardle confirmed it would only have a small impact.

There was also discussion about the balance of UK and overseas students in courses, and Jon Wardle stressed the School policy of ensuring a significant number of UK students on all courses.

#### **RESOLVED:**

- **To endorse the appointment of C&C Inspection Services to replace and install a modern upgrade to the TV Stage lighting rigging, as approved under Chair's action;**
- **To endorse the donation from the Land family to the NFTS Foundation to set up the Lesley Land Scholarship Fund.**

### 2.4 Minutes from F&GP Committee

Ian Lewis presented the minutes of the meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2023. He advised that all significant items discussed were on the Board agenda.

### 2.5 Minutes from Audit Committee

Pukar Mehta presented the minutes of the meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2023. He drew attention to the check the Committee had requested on the School's use of NDAs, and he reported on two very positive internal audit reports. Finally, he advised that the Committee had discussed the risks of AI to School operations, and Eleanor Wheal described the actions already being taken.

Geoff Crossick advised that most HEIs were designing strategies to maximise the opportunities of AI rather than treating it as a threat. There was a wide-ranging discussion about how AI might affect the creative industries, both positively and negatively.

### 2.6 Report from GAR

Sophie Turner Laing reported that Laurent Samama had agreed to become the Chair of the F&GP Committee, and she stressed that another member of the Board was required on the Committee. She also provided an update on progress to recruit a new Chair of the Audit Committee.

### 2.7 Curriculum and Short Course Report

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 activities in the nations and regions. He also advised of the discussions and actions that had taken place as a result of the Periodic Review of courses and the new Corporate Plan.

### 2.8 Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act

Eleanor Wheal described the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill which had recently become law. She explained that it put new duties on HEIs and students' unions, and gave the Office for Students (OfS) an enhanced role in promoting free

speech. It would be necessary for the School to produce a new Code of Practice to ensure compliance.

Geoff Crossick advised waiting to see what actions other, more exposed HEIs, proposed before developing the Code. The Board also discussed the potential implications of the Act upon student productions.

### **3. Strategy and Discussion.**

#### **3.1 Corporate Plan and KPIs 2028**

Jon Wardle advised that Management had produced a new version of the Corporate Plan, which had been revised in the light of discussion at the February Board. He reminded the Board that the intention was to evolve and build upon existing strengths, and he described how the School would grow over the next five years in six key areas: nations & regions growth, new courses, R&D, apprenticeships, student support and alumni.

He presented a short version of the Plan that could be displayed on the School website, particularly for the benefit of external funders of the School, and to support future applications for funding.

Pukar Mehta questioned if sustainability was sufficiently highlighted, and Jon Wardle proposed an additional page to show the 'enablers' that would underpin the Plan.

**RESOLVED: To approve the Corporate Plan, subject to the inclusion of an 'enablers' page to include Sustainability as an enabler. The Plan could then be published online.**

#### **3.2 Five-Year Forecast**

Trevor Hall updated members on the financial implications of the ambitions set out in the draft Corporate Plan 2028, and he presented a proposed five-year financial forecast incorporating the six ambitions described above.

He outlined the key assumptions that underpinned the forecast, including the level of tuition fees; new courses to be developed; new approaches to delivery, including apprenticeships; staff pay rises; cost inflation; student production budgets; the CAPEX budget; developments in the regional hubs; and additional premises. He stressed the importance of sustainable growth.

Scott Forrest asked how the School student fees compared with international competitors. Jon Wardle explained that it was a delicate balance to remain competitive: the School was cheaper than comparable US institutions, but more expensive than European competitors.

***The staff and SU reps left the meeting for the following discussion on the staff pay award.***

The Board discussed the proposed pay award for staff, and in particular the cost-of-living pressures upon staff and how the School could best respond to this.

Geoff Crossick asked about the inflation assumptions, and Trevor Hall explained that these were based upon published predictions, but with contingency funding available, if needed.

**RESOLVED: To approve the five-year financial forecast, including:**

- **the proposed level of home and overseas course fees for 2023/24;**
- **the proposed staff pay offer for 2023/24.**

#### **3.3 KPIs**

Trevor Hall explained that management had considered the activities and objectives set out in the new Corporate Plan and he proposed a suite of KPIs to monitor progress over the life of the plan.

There was discussion about the national and regional hubs and whether the KPI targets were sufficiently ambitious, and it was agreed that these should be revisited when the pilot projects in Scotland had been completed and any lessons learnt.

Miranda Wayland asked about disability-related KPIs, and Jon Wardle agreed it would be added as an 'enabler' KPI.

Jon Wardle also described possible models for apprenticeship development, including PG-level courses for existing staff wishing to progress, and entry-level courses for new recruits.

#### **ACTIONS:**

- **To include a disability KPI to be monitored as an enabler KPI.**
- **To review the national and regional hubs target when pilot projects were complete.**

#### 3.4 Vision, Objectives, Goals 2023/24

Jon Wardle set out the specific objectives and goals that the School management team would work to deliver for each of the six areas of the Corporate Plan in its first year, together with the tasks that needed to be completed by 31<sup>st</sup> July 2024.

He explained that action plans would be developed at various levels of the School.

Sophie Turner Laing suggested that traffic lights be added to the table to monitor progress which should be reviewed at each meeting.

The Board noted the paper.

#### 3.5 NFTS Scotland Growth Plan

Jon Wardle provided details of the plan to grow and deepen the impact of NFTS Scotland.

He explained how the plans for Scotland integrated with the wider plans to grow the NFTS nations and regions provision, and he described the enablers and investment that would be required.

#### 3.6 Disability Commitment Update

Gillian Carr described the School's commitment to supporting greater inclusion of disabled talent within the film, games and television industries.

She explained that the NFTS had adopted the recommendations from an external report it had commissioned, and consequently, with advice from industry partners, had developed a Disabled Talent Commitment to detail the short- and longer-term actions the School would take.

#### 3.7 Supporting applicants and students from low socio-economic backgrounds

Eleanor Wheel described how the School would encourage applicants from low socio-economic backgrounds, and support them better at the School.

She explained that the School's former SU President had organised a focus group meeting for current students from low socio-economic backgrounds to discuss the barriers and challenges faced by applicants and students.

As a result, a range of recommendations had been agreed, including adjusting the timetable to allow students more time to work part time; producing clearer information about scholarships; and investigating options for local accommodation that the School could offer to students as part of a package of support.

Adil Ray asked if the hubs attracted more diverse applicants, and Jon Wardle confirmed that this was the case, because of the range of short courses with flexible study options. The part time Diplomas would also be valuable in this respect.

#### 3.8 Student Mental Health / Duty of Care

Eleanor Wheel summarised recent developments concerning statutory duty of care towards students, and the new Mental Health Charter.

She explained that the School would sign up to the Charter, and would also strengthen its provision in mental health support, including the following measures: recruiting a full-time specialist mental health advisor; providing a 24/7 telephone counselling service for students; providing additional training to staff on confidentiality, data sharing, and mental health first aid.

**RESOLVED: To approve the Student Mental Health / Duty of Care paper.**

### 3.9 Camden Film Quarter

Jon Wardle outlined an opportunity to be part of a major development, the Camden Film Quarter, which would provide a London base for the School. He explained that the developers had prepared a Memorandum of Understanding and that he hoped the Board would agree to establish a small working group to review the opportunity.

**RESOLVED: To sign the Memorandum of Understanding and establish a small working group to review the opportunity presented by the Camden Film Quarter.**

### **4. Any Other Business**

Sophie Turner Laing thanked Phil Edgar Jones and Sky for their support with the Gala

She advised that this was the last Board meeting for Sara Geater, Chair of the Audit Committee, and Ian Lewis, Chair of the F&GP Committee, and she thanked them for all their support and advice over the years.

The Board also formally expressed its thanks to Sara and Ian, and presented them with tokens of its appreciation.

### **5. Date of Next Meeting:**

This was confirmed as Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> September 2023 at 10.30am at the NFTS, Beaconsfield.

### **6. Board Briefing**

Becky Gregory-Clarke, Head of Immersive, explained the CoStar project in more detail, and described some of the work the School would be developing, as well as that of the other partners.

The Board thanked Becky for a very interesting presentation.