

## NATIONAL FILM AND TELEVISION SCHOOL

### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS HELD ON TUESDAY 28<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2023 AT NFTS BEACONSFIELD.**

**Present:** Sophie Turner Laing (Chair), Polly Cochrane, Geoffrey Crossick, Patrick Fuller, John Lee, Pukar Mehta, Max Pederson, Laurent Samama, Bal Samra, Hilary Strong, Jon Wardle and Scott Forrest by Zoom.

Apologies: Phil Edgar-Jones, Caroline Hollick, Oli Hyatt, Stephen Louis, Andrew Macdonald, Ollie Madden, Charlotte Moore, Adil Ray, Caroline Silver, Mary Stiasny, Sue Vertue, Miranda Wayland, Eleanor Wheal

In attendance: Trevor Hall, Mark Readman.

Clerk: Chris Wensley

**Declaration of Personal Interests:** None.

Since this was their final meeting, the Chair thanked Mary Stiasny, in her absence, and also Max Pederson, the SU President, for their valuable contributions to the business of the Board. She also stressed the importance of the November Board at which several important OfS documents needed Board approval each year.

Finally, she briefly reviewed a very successful year for the School, and the Board thanked the Director for leading his team so effectively.

Hilary Strong suggested that the School might organise a Board social event early in 2024 to enable members to see award-winning student work.

**ACTION: Chris Wensley to remind members of the dates of 2024 Board meetings.**

#### **1. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

##### 1.1 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the previous Board of Governors Meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2023 were approved as an accurate record.

##### 1.2 Actions.

It was noted that the action point *Chris Wensley to present revised Board Terms of Reference to a future meeting* was on the agenda.

##### 1.3 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

#### **2. Updates from Committees**

##### 2.1 Minutes from F&GP Committee.

Laurent Samama presented the minutes of the meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2023. He advised that the F&GP had recommended for approval by the Board the OfS Annual Accountability, including the annual financial statements and OFS Annual Financial return and the Prevent Return (see agenda item 5.8). He also drew attention to the Committee's discussion of the pension deficit.

Geoff Crossick referred to the Graduate Input report which had been discussed by the Committee and it was agreed that the five-year cycle for conducting this should be maintained.

**ACTION: Management to update the Board on the pension deficit at a 2024 meeting.**

## 2.2 Minutes from Audit Committee.

Pukar Mehta presented the minutes of the meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2023. He drew attention to the Committee's discussions on cyber security; the positive internal audit report on the School's Prevent programme; and the School's review of its Business Continuity procedures. He also thanked Geoff Crossick for his report to the Committee on the deliberations of the Academic Standards Committee as part of its consideration of academic risk. He also confirmed that the Audit Committee had reviewed the financial statements and BDO's Audit Completion Report and recommended these to the Board for approval.

It was agreed that any joint meeting of F&GP and Audit Committees should be limited to only one or two items of common concern to ensure that the work of the two committees was clearly discrete.

### ACTIONS:

- **Management to seek advice from relevant Board members on the review of business continuity.**
- **Management to produce a business case for the expansion of the Beaconsfield campus.**

## 2.3 Update from GAR

Sophie Turner Laing reported on recent meetings of the Governance, Appointments and Remuneration Committee. She advised that there would be a review of the operation of the Board and the Audit Committee early in 2024, and that GAR was revising the process and criteria for the award of the NFTS Fellowship.

**ACTION: Chris Wensley to circulate to members the process and criteria for the award of the NFTS Fellowship when agreed by GAR.**

## **3. Strategy**

### 3.1 Report from Board Annual Strategy Meeting

Jon Wardle reported on discussions at the Board's annual strategy meeting, including recruitment plans, the proposed Games strategy, risk appetite and trans- awareness.

There was discussion about the data that the School gathered on applicants, and how this might best be used for marketing and other purposes.

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

### 3.2 Sean Connery Talent Lab

Jon Wardle reported on plans and developments for the newly-announced Sean Connery Talent Lab, including industry partners who will be supporting the Lab. He advised that the site in Edinburgh was adjacent to a working studio, and that this initiative would represent the first time that NFTS participants had made films other than Beaconsfield-based students.

The Board noted that the Lab contributed to the Corporate Plan aim to grow NFTS Scotland revenue, and congratulated Management on the project.

### 3.3 NFTS Games Strategy

Jon Wardle presented the new Games Strategy, following discussions at the Board Strategy meeting.

The Strategy was warmly welcomed, and the Board agreed that branding and teaching space were the main issues to be resolved.

Geoff Crossick asked for more information about demand for the programme from applicants and for its graduates from industry, as well as a paper differentiating the proposed courses from competitors.

**RESOLVED: To approved the NFTS Games Strategy**

**ACTION: Management to present an implementation plan for the Games Strategy to the June Board meeting for final approval.**

## 4. Fellowship

### 4.1 NFTS Fellowship

Jon Wardle presented the recommendation from the GAR Committee that the Fellowship be awarded to production designer Sarah Greenwood and set designer Katie Spencer.

The Board agreed that they were worthy recipients of the award and warmly endorsed the recommendation.

**RESOLVED: To award the NFTS Fellowship to Sarah Greenwood and Katie Spencer.**

## 5. Reports

### 5.1 Director's Report

The Director reported on his activities from September to November 2023. He drew particular attention to the announcement of the auction of costumes and props from the Crown series to fund future scholarships; good progress with 23/24 recruitment; plans for the 2024 Gala; and the potential development of the Beaconsfield campus. He also reported on progress made to date towards achieving the School's vision, objectives and goals for the year 2023/24.

### 5.2 Finance Director's Report

Trevor Hall updated the Committee on the School's financial performance for the two months to 30 September 2023. He confirmed that performance was ahead of budget and that the School's finances remained robust and sustainable. The Board noted the report.

### 5.3 Student Union Report

Max Pederson reported on activities that the SU had organised or supported. He also advised that a current re-structure of the SU would allow it to work more closely with different groups of students. Finally, he reflected on his year of office as the SU President.

The Board thanked Max for his report.

### 5.4 StoryFutures Academy Final Report

Jon Wardle advised that the The StoryFutures Academy: National Centre for Immersive Storytelling project had concluded on 31st August 2023.

He reported that the programme had trained well over a thousand screen industry professionals and had had work recognised at a range of international festivals, as well as delivering a range of benefits to NFTS students and graduates through Bridge-to-Industry productions, placement opportunities, and training sessions. Following discussion, Jon Wardle suggested that the NFTS Research Strategy be updated to include a reference to buying in specialist research & knowledge exchange expertise at the appropriate time.

### 5.5 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 the new editing pathway, and activity in the hubs.

The Board noted the report.

### 5.6 Apprenticeships

In Eleanor Wheal's absence, Jon Wardle described preparations for the delivery of the Level 4 Media Production Coordinator apprenticeship for the ten apprentices who will be offered a contract of employment with the NFTS.

He advised also that the School was in discussions with other industry partners concerning developing apprenticeships. It was noted that much of the additional bureaucracy was because the School would be the employer for this first group of apprentices, but that this would not be the case with other apprenticeship models.

#### 5.7 NFTS Disability Bursary

In Eleanor Wheal's absence, Jon Wardle presented a proposal for the launch of ringfenced disability bursaries.

**RESOLVED: To approve the disability bursary proposal.**

#### 5.8 OfS Annual Accountability and Prevent Return

Trevor Hall presented the 2023 OFS Annual Accountability (including the annual financial statements and OFS Annual Financial return) and Prevent returns to members for approval.

He advised that

- 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 were recommended to the Board for approval.
- the external auditors (BDO) intended to issue an unmodified audit opinion and no points for Board / Management were raised in their Audit Completion Report.
- the financial statements and Audit Completion Report had also been reviewed by F&GP, in addition to consideration of the OfS Annual Financial Returns and commentary, all of which were recommended to the Board by F&GP for approval.
- the Annual Prevent Return had been reviewed by Audit Committee and was recommended to the Board for approval.

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

**RESOLVED:**

- **To authorise the Chair and Director of the School to sign the financial statements and letter of representation for the year ended 31 July 2023, on behalf of the Board;**
- **To approve the submission of the 2023 OFS Annual Financial Return and commentary;**
- **To authorise the Chair of Audit Committee to sign the OFS Annual Prevent Return for the year ended 31 July 2023, on behalf of the Board.**

#### 5.9 Annual Quality Assurance Evaluation Report

In order to assist the Board with its evaluation of academic risk, Geoff Crossick presented the minutes of the annual extraordinary meeting of the Academic Standards Committee meeting and the Quality Assurance Evaluation Report which had been discussed. 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.

**ACTION: Management to send an invitation to Board members inviting attendance at the next extraordinary meeting of the Academic Standards Committee meeting.**

#### 5.10 Annual Audit Committee Report

Trevor Hall presented the 2023 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.

#### 5.11 Board Terms of Reference

Chris Wensley presented revised Terms of Reference for Board which were now presented more clearly and simply.

**RESOLVED: To adopt the revised Board Terms of Reference.**

#### 5.12 Modern Slavery Statement

Trevor Hall presented the School's new Modern Slavery Statement, required as part of the delivery of apprenticeships.

**RESOLVED: To approve the NFTS Modern Slavery Statement.**

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

This was confirmed as Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> February 2024 at 10.30am at the NFTS, Beaconsfield.

#### **7. Board Briefing**

Daniel Green, a student from Science & Natural History, explained the course's aims and operation, and he showed examples of work he had produced. The Board thanked Daniel for a very interesting presentation.