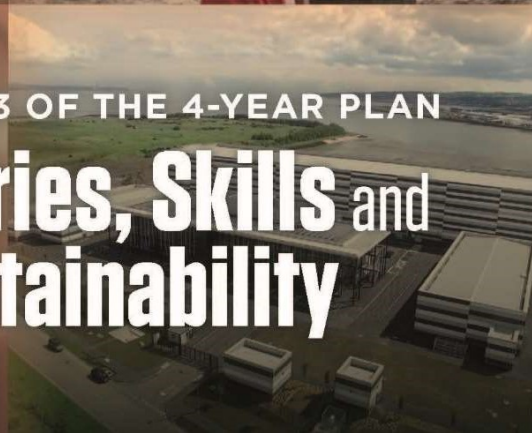


Business Plan 2024-25



YEAR 3 OF THE 4-YEAR PLAN

Stories, Skills and Sustainability

Business Plan 2024-25

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Introduction: Year 3 of Stories, Skills & Sustainability Strategy 2022-26

Northern Ireland Screen is the screen agency for Northern Ireland. We are committed to maximising the economic, cultural, and educational value of the screen industries for the benefit of Northern Ireland.

Our 3 economic, cultural, and educational objectives are:

1. For Northern Ireland to have the strongest screen industry outside of London in the UK and Ireland;
2. To ensure the industry supports vibrant and diverse cultural voices that will be recognised and celebrated equally at home and abroad;
3. Mainstream the most successful screen and digital technologies education provision in Europe across Northern Ireland.

Our values are:

- Act as a champion for the screen industries in Northern Ireland.
- Deliver an integrated strategy tying together economic, cultural and educational objectives
- Prioritise interventions that deliver the widest reach and contribute positively to social inclusion, diversity and equality
- Embrace all screen product
- Be customer-facing and build on previous success

This Business Plan relates to year 3 of Northern Ireland Screen's 4-year strategy 'Stories, Skills & Sustainability 2022-26'.

Despite very considerable headwinds during the first 2 years of the strategy, including sustained strikes shutting down large scale production, our progress against the key economic KPIs indicates we are almost up to pace to deliver our economic target of £430 million direct spend.

We have acted upon the DfE's Minister's 4 key priorities as part of a new Economic Mission and have mapped and prioritised our activity accordingly as detailed on page 6. We would also highlight these examples of strong alignment with the Ministerial Priorities:

Good Jobs

Our CINE programme is unique across the UK and Ireland in its focus on creating genuine job opportunities within the screen industries for those historically least likely to enter the sector.

Productivity

Studio Ulster, supported by the Belfast Regional City Deal, is the largest productivity focused project undertaken by the screen sector in Northern Ireland.

Regional Balance

We strongly support the screen cluster in Derry-Londonderry which has very considerable exporting strengths in games, animation, fact/ent and Irish Language

Decarbonisation

We have already made significant inroads in decarbonisation with the adoption of HVO to replace diesel across Large Scale Production, planned reduction in food waste through a reuse scheme, and with the use of renewable energy through the grid.

Northern Ireland Screen is primarily funded by the Department for the Economy (DfE), the Department for Communities (DfC), and the British Film Institute (BFI) on behalf of the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). While Northern Ireland Screen delivers an integrated strategy, in broad terms DfE supports our economic activities; DfC supports our cultural, educational and outreach activities, and the BFI3 supports our Irish Language and Ulster-Scots Funds.

Success & Highlights 2023-24

Awards

Lisa McGee's **Derry Girls** kept the awards rolling in winning the Comedy Award at the International Emmys. Throughout the year the hit sitcom also picked up three BAFTA TV Awards (Best Scripted Comedy, Best Writer Comedy and Best Female Performance in a Comedy), two RTS Awards (Best Scripted Comedy and Best Writer Comedy), an IFTA (Best Script Drama), and was named Edinburgh TV Festival's Best Comedy Series.

The documentary sector continued to make waves during 2023 with Kathryn Ferguson's **Nothing Compares** picking up the Rose d'Or Award for Arts. The film also won the George Morrison Feature Documentary Award at IFTA. Kathryn was named as part of BAFTA's 2023 Breakthrough cohort. **Nothing Compares** was broadcast on Sky Documentaries in July, just days after the sad passing of Sinead O'Connor.

Alison Millar's **Lyra** won Best Single Documentary at the Grierson Trust's 2023 British Documentary Awards and Best European TV Documentary at the Prix Europa Awards as well as Best Documentary at the Broadcast Awards. Northern Ireland Screen partnered with Hidden Light, Channel 4 and Erica Starling on a special event on Lyra's legacy and the Good Friday generation. The event, marking the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement, saw Hillary Clinton in conversation with Alison Millar and Monica McWilliams.

Large-Scale Production

Universal's **How to Train Your Dragon**, a live-action feature adaptation of the 2010 animation of the same name, began filming in Northern Ireland in early 2024 following a challenging hiatus due to the WGA and SAG strikes.

Netflix's mid-air action comedy, **Lift** starring Kevin Hart was released on Netflix on in January and quickly made its way to number one on the Netflix global top ten. Directed by F. Gary Gray **Lift** was filmed in Harbour Studios and on location across Northern Ireland in 2022.

Television Audiences

TV drama made in Northern Ireland kept audiences enthralled during 2023. **Blue Lights**, written by locals Declan Lawn and Adam Patterson launched on BBC One and iPlayer in March 2023 and was a huge ratings and critical success. Unsurprisingly the commission of a second series was announced and that will air in spring this year, with series 3 and 4 being commissioned ahead of that.

BBC One's primetime 9pm Sunday evening was dominated with Northern Ireland drama over the summer; **World on Fire** S2 broadcast from mid-July for 6 weeks with **The Woman in the Wall** taking over that slot in August.

HTM Television's covid drama **Breathtaking** aired on ITV1 in February to great critical acclaim and drew in over 2m viewers for each of its three episodes.

Fact-Ent

Brand new quiz show **The Finish Line** from Potato TV and Nice One Productions aired on BBC One from August, Roman Kemp and Sarah Greene watched eager contestants compete in quiz-fuelled races across a unique racetrack set. After a successful first series which was a huge hit with viewers, BBC One confirmed the return of **The Finish Line** for an extended series two which recently finished wrapped in Belfast.

BBC Three viewers got a behind the scenes look at what goes on in the world of global cosmetics company BPerfect in **Made Up in Belfast**. The docu-reality show unveiled the lives, loves and friendships of a dynamic young team working at a global cosmetics company based in County Antrim. A special Christmas edition also aired on BBC One NI & BBC iPlayer. The series was produced by Afro-Mic Productions who won Small Indie of the Year at the 2023 Edinburgh TV Festival.

Interactive

Italic Pig's highly anticipated **Paleo Pines** was released in September on various platforms including Nintendo Switch, PlayStation and Xbox.

Belfast based Soft Leaf Studios won the Most Dedicated Studio Award for its project, **Stories of Blossom** at the Game Accessibility Awards.

Summary Actions for 2024/25: Year 3 of Stories, Skills & Sustainability 22-26

Year 3 Stories, Skills & Sustainability Strategy 2022-26

Ensuring a steady flow of production activity remains the number one priority of any Northern Ireland Screen strategy. The considerable number of investments secured and closed in the final quarter of year 2 should ensure steady production across 24-25.

Large-Scale

In a deflated market securing further Large Scale projects within the financial year will be challenge and require considerable focus. Utilising the Phase 2 of Belfast Harbour Studios will be a priority.

Studio Ulster

Studio Ulster will come online towards the end of 24/25. Securing production that utilises Studio Ulster will be a very high priority. We will be seeking exemplar projects across the Sectors with a focus on fact/ent and feature documentary as well as tv drama and large scale.

Belfast Stories

Continuing to support Belfast Stories is a high priority including supporting the conclusion of its Business Case. During 24/25 the specification of Belfast Stories as it relates to screen industry and screen culture should be finalised. Northern Ireland Screen's priority in this regard is a step change in the provision of moving image archive as a core element of Belfast Stories.

Skills

Our core Skills Development Programme will continue at its increased level of focus and investment. We'll continue to focus on all 6 Sectors with a further emphasis on Virtual Production and VFX with the opening of Studio Ulster expected in 2024.

BFI Skills Cluster

The **SCREEN Skills Cluster** is an initiative designed to identify skills shortages and co-ordinate skills and training opportunities for crew in Northern Ireland. In consultation with industry, the cluster will continue to enhance education and industry pathways, address skills gaps hindering underrepresented groups through CPD and provide training on innovative technologies.

CINE

The Creative Industries New Entrant scheme (CINE) was launched in April 2022 and 93 trainees are now taking part in the scheme. Delivered in partnership with BBC Northern Ireland, we will continue to evolve the scheme ensuring that it delivers maximum value to the participating trainees while remaining mindful that the scheme is only achievable if the companies providing the placements are also satisfied with the value of the scheme. Securing CINE's future beyond 24/25 is a high priority.

Decarbonisation

Titanic studios, Belfast Harbour Studios, and Silverpoint Studios are all having HVO tanks installed to deliver our Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil substitution pilot. HVO replacing diesel has considerable potential to reduce carbon emissions. Management of food waste is our second scale pilot while we continue to work closely with Albert on carbon certification for projects and studio facilities.

Education

We will input into DfE's Digital Skills Action Plan 2024-2034, highlighting the work of the Creative Learning Centres in supporting schools, teachers and young people in the delivery of creative and digital skills. We will work collectively to strengthen existing partnerships across C2k, Education Authority, CCEA and the FE Colleges.

Archive

Through our contemporary collecting project, Northern Ireland Now, we will endeavour to address gaps and issues of under-representation in our screen heritage collections to ensure they better reflect the diversity of life in Northern Ireland today. We also seek to connect with underserved audiences and overcome barriers for audiences to interact with their screen heritage.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE DELIVERY OF THE DfE MINISTER'S ECONOMIC VISION

In February 2024 the DfE Minister set out four key priorities as part of a new Economic Mission. Northern Ireland Screen's activities, including those outlined in the KPIs, align across the 4 priorities as follows:

Good Jobs

- Ensure that % levels of NI crew and Heads of Department (per the KPIs) are met on all productions
- Support trainees in accordance with sectoral needs across a range of skills initiatives including company placements, stepping up, craft & technical, animation and interactive schemes
- Through the CINE scheme support trainees specifically from disabled, ethnic and/or lower social economic backgrounds
- Deliver year-round industry work experience for young people that provides visibility and understanding of jobs available across the screen industries and the pathways to those careers

Productivity

- Support and development of indigenous companies and incoming productions across 6 key sectoral areas
- Delivery of a Northern Ireland economic return of £431 million across the strategy period (April 2022-March 2026)
- 90% of production projects (by value) to secure investment and distribution from the UK market and 75% from the international market
- Support projects that utilise virtual production/XR/AR or other innovative technologies and seek to increase the number of projects annually
- Support R&D through Screen Fund development awards to production companies
- Support All Island production and development projects

Regional Balance

- Ensure all skills initiatives and crewing opportunities are promoted across NI
- Engage with productions and Location Managers to promote filming locations across the region
- Encourage production and development applications and support projects from companies across NI
- Deliver archive, education and exhibition initiatives, schemes and workshops across NI including engagement with schools, creative learning centres, film festivals

Decarbonisation

- Introduction of food waste reduction measures on large-scale and high-end TV projects
- Promotion and increased application of hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO) on large scale and High End TV (HETV) projects
- Development of a digital platform that promotes circular economy procedures within the screen industry
- Deliver a regularly updated online resource to help productions source sustainable products and services
- Requirement for all production projects to calculate their carbon emissions via BAFTA Albert carbon calculator or an alternative platform when Albert is not applicable to the project

These activities are further reflected in the Screen Industries Sectoral Action Plan which was developed by Northern Ireland Screen and sets out a range of activities that aim to support the DfE Minister's key priorities. Within the plan, the focus of these activities is categorised under four broad themes – Economic, Skills and Education, Innovation and Culture. The Screen Industries Sectoral Action Plan is one of seven plans from the most innovation, productive and internationally orientated parts of the local economy.

WHAT WE DO

ECONOMIC

Northern Ireland Screen Fund: Production and Development

The Northern Ireland Screen Fund, serves as both a catalyst for development investment and an axis for production investment. This fund is the cornerstone of Northern Ireland Screen's strategy to enhance the growth of the screen production sector. It strategically targets six key sectors: Large-Scale Production, Animation and Children's content, Television Drama, Factual/Entertainment Television, Interactive/Games, and Independent Film. This targeted approach ensures a vibrant and diverse screen production landscape in Northern Ireland.

Film Studios

Northern Ireland Screen is collaborating with studio owners to enhance and maximize the use of their facilities. We are committed to integrating sustainable practices into the studio ecosystem, reflecting our dedication to environmental responsibility. We are excited about the ongoing development of Ulster University's Studio Ulster, the virtual production centre of excellence sited in the Belfast Harbour Studios campus. The expansion of Belfast Harbour Studios is progressing smoothly, with the new stages coming online in Summer 2024. These initiatives underscore our commitment to fostering a vibrant and sustainable creative industry in Northern Ireland.

Skills

We have implemented robust monitoring systems to measure the effectiveness of our skills programmes, particularly focusing on gender, individuals receiving benefits, and those with registered disabilities. Northern Ireland Screen has made a substantial investment in its skills budget, enabling us to support a greater number of new entrants. In addition to our general skills initiatives and in partnership with the BBC, the DfC-funded CINE scheme is designed specifically to provide opportunities for individuals who have traditionally faced challenges in securing employment in the screen industries.

Development Activity

Our Development Activity is an integrated programme that includes script development seminars, hands-on production workshops, and access to professional development spanning film, television, and digital content. The goal is to empower local IP creators to unlock their full potential. In sync with the BFI's forward-looking strategy, BFI2033, we will continue to strengthen our partnership with the BFI. We deliver these activities both in-person and online, ensuring accessibility and convenience for all participants.

Lottery Funding

Under the Lottery Act, film is recognised as a good cause. Northern Ireland Screen, entrusted by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, is responsible for distributing these funds. In 2024-25, our Lottery Funding will maintain its emphasis on nurturing New and Emerging Talent in short film and supporting individual writers discovered through the New Writer Focus scheme. Unfortunately, due to budget reductions, the fund has been downsized from £250k to £125k. Despite this setback, we remain committed to our mission of fostering talent and creativity in the film industry.

Marketing

Northern Ireland Screen serves as a global ambassador for Northern Ireland, promoting it as a hub for independent film, television, and games production to the international screen industries. We take pride in sharing our success stories and providing both practical and financial backing for distribution, sales, marketing, and PR within the sector. We will enhance participation in industry markets, festivals, and conferences in 2024-25, further strengthening our presence in the global screen industries.



Netflix's Lift



Belfast Harbour Studios



The Pixel Mill



Paleo Pines



The Last Rifleman



'Lyra' – Hillary Clinton event

CULTURE

Irish Language Broadcast Fund

The Irish Language Broadcast Fund (ILBF) fosters the Irish speaking independent production sector in Northern Ireland and serves an audience keen to view locally produced Irish language programming for BBC NI, TG4 and RTÉ as well as other digital platforms. The ILBF also supports radio and interactive content, including educational content and funds a range of training initiatives in television and radio production for Irish speakers working or aspiring to work in the sector in Northern Ireland.

Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund

The aim of the Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund (USBF) is to ensure that the heritage, culture and language of Ulster-Scots are expressed through moving image for a Northern Ireland audience. The USBF is also open to supporting radio and interactive content and funds a trainee scheme designed to attract new researchers or aspiring assistant producers who are passionate and knowledgeable about Ulster-Scots.

Film Culture and Audiences

Northern Ireland Screen provides core funding to the key film festivals in the region: Belfast Film Festival; Docs Ireland; Cinemagic Film Festival; Foyle Film Festival, and to Northern Ireland's only cultural cinema, the Queen's Film Theatre (QFT). As part of our new strategy, we are committed to collaborating with all our exhibition providers to ensure that audiences, and in particular young and hard to reach audiences, have regular opportunities to see the widest range of films. The development by Belfast City Council of **Belfast Stories**, a new visitor attraction, to include a home for the screen industries and a state-of-the-art five-screen cinema (including an outdoor screen) is a priority.

Heritage and Archive

Northern Ireland Screen works to preserve and promote Northern Ireland's screen culture, working with a variety of local and national partners to advocate for our moving image heritage and deliver a broad range of cultural, educational and wellbeing-focused archive activities. Participation in digitisation schemes allows us to safeguard our screen culture for future generations, whilst dedicated outreach and learning programmes ensure that the public value of materials can be realised by audiences today. Belfast Stories will also be a home for Northern Ireland Screen's Digital Film Archive.

Northern Ireland Screen's Digital Film Archive

One of the key ways in which we maximise public access to our moving image heritage is through Northern Ireland Screen's Digital Film Archive (DFA). With content spanning from 1897 to the present day, the DFA is a free public access resource available online – digitalfilmarchive.net – and at a variety of locations across Northern Ireland. Recognised by the BFI as a 'Significant Screen Heritage Collection', the DFA has been greatly expanded in recent years via several collaborative digitisation initiatives – the DfC-funded UTV Archive Partnership, the BFI's Heritage 2022 Videotape Digitisation Scheme and the Broadcast Authority of Ireland's Archiving Scheme 2.

Outreach and Public Engagement

Northern Ireland Screen's dedicated Outreach programme provides meaningful engagement with screen culture for a variety of audiences, including community groups and charities, historical societies and schools, in areas of social deprivation and rural isolation. Access to DFA content is further facilitated through special screenings, events, exhibitions and illustrated talks, with a range of collaborative initiatives allowing partner organisations to utilise the DFA in their own outreach and educational activities.



Kneecap



Andrew Trimble: For Ulster and Ireland



Screening at Belfast Film Festival



Back to the Archive event, Strand Cinema for Docs Ireland. Featuring Matt McGinn, This Ship Argo and HY:LY



Digital Film Archive clip of The Beatles



Drumglass Archive Educational Project

WHAT WE DO

EDUCATION

Creative Learning Centres

Northern Ireland Screen works in partnership with Northern Ireland's three Creative Learning Centres (CLCs); the Nerve Centre in Derry/Londonderry, Nerve Belfast and the Education Authority's AmmA Centre in Armagh. These centres offer a range of integrated creative digital technology skills programmes for teachers, youth and community leaders and young people to build sustainability in schools and the youth sector. By empowering teachers, the CLCs are encouraging a step change into life-long learning across our schools, youth, and community organisations with the new creative learning approaches of the digital age. A key element of the service provides professional learning programmes for teachers and youth leaders.



Nerve Centre Primary Coding Partnership

Moving Image Arts A Level and GCSE

Northern Ireland Screen works in partnership with the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) and Northern Ireland's three Creative Learning Centres on the continuing development of Moving Image Arts (MIA), the only A-Level and GCSE in the UK in digital filmmaking. Northern Ireland Screen sees MIA as the most significant first building block or entry point to the screen industries. CCEA celebrated the 20th anniversary of the subject as part of the Moving Image Arts Showcase in November 2023 with over 600 of Northern Ireland's most creative young filmmakers and animators brought together to see their work on the big screen at cinemas in Belfast and Derry.



Moving Image Arts 2023 Showcase

Into Film

The Into Film Programme, free to all schools and other youth settings in Northern Ireland, seeks to fully realise the educational, cultural, and social power of film in children and young people's development. Into Film's new streaming platform, alongside physical and digital teaching resources such as Story Builder increases the emphasis on all school engagement. Enhanced funding from the Department for Communities ensures additional support for schools operating in areas of disadvantage in the provision of film-based education and beyond incorporating games, interactive content and screen-based storytelling. Alongside rich online content for young audiences, this provides 5-19 year olds with inspiring opportunities to learn about and develop a passion right across the screen sectors.



Primary School Stor builder session

Careers/Work Experience

Delivering on our strategic objective to strengthen the pathways into the screen industries, Northern Ireland Screen has prioritised the need for young people, schools, youth groups, teachers and parents from all social backgrounds to better understand the career opportunities in the screen industries and the pathways to those careers. ScreenWorks and the Screen Academies programmes will continue in 2024/25 in providing young people in Northern Ireland aged 14-19, industry-led, practical work experience, featuring craft and technical roles across all five screen industries, as well as considering any in demand and emerging roles.



ScreenWorks Sound Design Workshop

HOW WE DO IT

Economic

Northern Ireland Screen Fund

Stories, Skills and Sustainability has a target of £431million direct Northern Ireland spend, an increase of over 43% against the target for Opening Doors 2.

The specific commitments and actions below cascade down from **Stories, Skills and Sustainability** and change only modestly year to year – many will require the whole strategy period to achieve while some are aspirational.

Sustainability

We are opening up sustainability as a key consideration when supporting or funding projects and Northern Ireland Screen will seek to assist the companies across all of the Sectors to adopt more sustainable approaches. While we have begun this process and are wholly aligned to the wider UK ALBERT Certification Scheme which seeks to embed sustainable practices, there is a long way to go on sustainability.

We will review the HVO Pilot Scheme and if it is feasible seek to roll out an HVO support scheme, encourage vendors to provide more sustainable goods and services, and challenge unsustainable practices where we see them.

Animation and Children's

- Through the BBC Partnership Agreement seek to increase the animation from Northern Ireland companies and increase Live Action content from both local and incoming companies.
- Support the growth of the animation sector outside of Greater Belfast.
- Support the animation sector in securing global partnerships and diversifying broadcasters.
- Development funding to be sustained or increased, to include the development of Live Action scripted.
- Creative Animation to continue as a strong talent development opportunity¹.
- The overall return ratio for Animation and Children's to remain at 7:1 with ratios for individual projects set against their specific needs and merits.
- Support service work which can be critical to sustaining work for the sectors at certain times.
- Expand animation beyond the servicing of the pre-school market.
- Support all island production as a priority.
- Ensure production companies undertake sustainable practices including Albert Sustainable Production Certification.

Large-Scale Production

- We will continue to support the development of Loop, Titanic, and Belfast Harbour Studios.
- For 24/25 there will be an emphasis on the new stages at Belfast Harbour Studios
- Studio Ulster will be the focus of our virtual production ambitions.
- The sector ratio will have a floor of 14.5:1 with an ambition to deliver a higher ratio whenever possible.
- Where the market allows, we will utilise our funding to lever greater commitment to skills development across the Large-Scale projects.
- We will do everything we can to persuade studios to pursue investment plans based on the general buoyancy of the market as opposed to holding out for anchor tenants.
- We will pursue a PACT/BECTU agreed rate card that acknowledges differential between London and the South East and the rest of the UK².
- We will pursue a differentiated UK tax credit regime that incentivises productions outside of London/South-East to a higher level³.
- We will bring producers, line producers, studio executives and studio bookers to Northern Ireland on familiarisation trips.

¹ One Creative Animation has already led to a very large international commission

² For example, within the USA there are different Union rate cards for the different production bases reflecting the difference cost bases

³ The Republic of Ireland takes this approach raising the incentive from 31% to 37% for production based outside of Greater Dublin

Television Drama

- We will prioritise home produced and home set productions and will support their recommissioning⁴.
- We, with the BBC, will prioritise the development slates of the four drama companies with substantive bases within Northern Ireland.
- We, with the BBC, will prioritise the development slates of the four comedy companies that the BBC has identified.
- We will develop relationships with other broadcasters, streamers, and international distributors and encourage them to develop and fund indigenous led projects.
- Projects that have a significant international dimension within the finance plan will be prioritised both in conjunction with the BBC and independently.
- Where there is a choice between incoming and indigenous projects, we will support the indigenous project even if the ratio of return to investment is lower.
- For fully indigenous projects backed by an international distributor or streamer, we will consider offering grant support as opposed to taking an equity position. However, where a grant is offered, the contracted spend ratio will be greater.
- Our involvement in all drama and comedy projects will be based on securing a minimum of 6 out of 8 of the key creative positions.
- All drama projects we support will carry out pre-production, production and post-production in Northern Ireland.
- Co-productions that split the value proposition, including the key creative elements, fairly across the partner regions will be considered on their merits.
- We will prioritise projects that can utilise Northern Ireland's build spaces or studios to maximise the use of those facilities.

Factual/Entertainment Television

- Recent appointment of the Unscripted Content Manager will drive the Factual/Entertainment Television area of the strategy and will reinforce our commitment to this area as a priority.
- Given the success of our partnership with BBC3, collaborating with BBC3 shall remain a priority – funding for the BBC3 schemes will remain ringfenced for 2024-25
- Following the success of our recent collaboration with Channel4 through the More4 Northern Ireland initiative, building on the momentum created by this collaboration shall remain a priority – funding for the More4 Northern Ireland scheme will remain ringfenced for 2024-25
- Following the launch in late 2023 of the Northern Ireland Screen and Disney+ EMEA Development Initiative, priority will be given to expanding this relationship to secure commissions for Northern Ireland based Indies.
- We will continue to pursue an expanded framework agreement with C4.
- We will seek to invigorate local company engagement with streamers and international distributors.
- Northern Ireland Factual Entertainment and Unscripted Indies will be encouraged to utilise Studio Ulster and explore virtual production possibilities within their current slate.
- Returning series remain the priority.
- The primary focus will remain on formats and other projects that can attract international sales as well as UK and Ireland commissions.

Independent Film

- We will utilise Lottery, Screen Fund, and partnership funds (BFI etc) to create opportunities for short filmmakers working in factual, fiction, children's live action, and animation through a combination of schemes that offer merit-based progression from short films to longer form content.
- We will use Lottery, Screen Fund, and partnership funds (BFI etc) to find, nurture and develop writers to the point that their work is of interest to agents, producers, and the wider film, television, and interactive industries.

⁴ For example, Blue Lights and Hope Street for the BBC

- We will use Screen Funds to develop and produce feature documentary projects with the potential to appeal to an international audience that will deliver unique visions and voices on universal stories from Northern Ireland resident filmmakers to the point that their work is of interest to agents, producers, and the wider film, television, and interactive industries. Consideration will also be given to incoming feature documentaries completing post production in Northern Ireland only when budget is available to support this.
- We will continue to fund a New Talent Focus film in 2024-25 provided a script of sufficient quality and scale is developed.
- We will seek partnerships with UK and Ireland film funds (BFI, Screen Ireland, BAI etc), PSB broadcasters (RTE, BBC, Film 4 etc), sales and distribution companies (Bankside, Blue Finch, Protagonist, Westend etc), streamers (Apple, Netflix, Hulu and Amazon etc) and private equity to finance indigenous fiction films.
- As with fiction films, Northern Ireland Screen will seek partnerships with UK and Ireland film funds (BFI/Doc Society, Screen Ireland, BAI etc), PSB broadcasters (RTE, BBC, Film4 etc), sales and distribution companies (Met Films, Dogwoof, Cat n' Docs etc), streamers (Apple, Netflix, Hulu and Amazon etc) and private equity to finance indigenous factual films. We will ensure sufficient resources are available to invest in the films that become viable.
- Given the priority to support local producers, only incoming independent films with very significant added value will be considered for support (e.g. significant portrayal reaching large audiences).

Games/Interactive Content

- Structuring development funding to Vertical Slice to reflect the high production standards expected of these Verticals and as well as adhering to realistic production milestones for tracking.
- For self-published games that generate interest and some revenue, funding to scale the project may be available.
- Prototyping funding will be available to support IP licensing tenders for potential cross sector content creation.
- Development funding will be available to support IP licensing tenders or the securing of service work.
- We will encourage co-production across this sector with access to a variety of Pixel Mill based and regional outreach events.
- The Pixel Mill will continue to develop as a focal point for interactive, games immersive and cross sector skills such as virtual production.
- We will seek to develop satellite mini hubs in Fermanagh, Derry/Londonderry and in Newry.
- Support services will include access to User Testing, GDC Vault, NewZoo and, if possible, access to Development Kits.
- We will work with Digital Catapult and the management of Ormeau Baths to expand the resources available at the Ormeau Baths generally.
- The Pixel Mill will provide co-working space intended to drive synergies between companies on a drop in, semi-permanent or dedicated desk basis depending on the scope of the project.

Skills

The Skills strategy is at the core pillar of our economic strategy and investment will increase accordingly.

Skills Strategy for Animation and Children's

- The skills budget for Animation and Children's will rise in proportion to the overall skills budget secured.
- The focus of skills development will be driven by the demands of the core animation companies.
- Stepping Up will continue to be utilised.
- Consistent across the whole of the Screen Fund, we will seek to ensure that the companies address skills gaps more strategically as a requirement of our production funding.
- We will retain the Creative Animation Scheme as our primary talent development vehicle.
- Whilst we will continue to ensure close collaboration between Ulster University and the animation studios, we will open opportunities to NI residents on other related courses.

Skills Strategy for Large-Scale Production

- Meaningful engagement with Northern Ireland Screen's skills programmes will be a pre-requisite of Large-Scale Production funding.
- When market conditions allow, a Large-Scale skills working group will be set up to seek to address long standing weaknesses in crew development including senior construction roles and camera crew.
- When market conditions allow, we will expand and grow the number of new entrant trainees that we place on Large-Scale production each year.
- We will expand and grow the number of established crew members that we support through the *Stepping Up Scheme*.
- The *Shadowing Scheme* for emerging talent has been expanded to include Producers as well as Directors with feature film and television drama credits.
- We will identify Northern Ireland residents in key roles or who could be fast tracked for these roles, and help them develop the skills, knowledge and experience required to fulfil those roles.
- Company placements for companies that provide facilities and services to the Large-Scale projects will be continued.
- On large scale returning series we will encourage a Skills Academy partnership to foster a skills culture on the Production.

Skills Strategy for Television Drama

- All funded productions will be expected to engage constructively with delivering our skills strategy.
- We will fully utilise the opportunities presented by both *Hope Street* and *Blue Lights* to not only develop indigenous crew but also indigenous writers, directors, and producers.
- We have expanded our director shadowing scheme to include producers.
- We will fund the placement of trainee script editors in the four drama companies that have already established substantive bases within Northern Ireland.

Skills Strategy for Factual/Entertainment

- We will investigate the running of another Aim High with BBC NI whilst developing an alternative scheme should the BBC chose not to commit to another Aim High in 24-25.
- The stepping-up scheme will continue to be available to the factual/entertainment sector.
- We will continue to support the Factual Fast track scheme to fast track the development of Series Producers in partnership with the BBC and Channel 4.

Skills Strategy for Independent Film

- We will run a comprehensive range of new and emerging talent progression initiatives under the Network banner.
- We will encourage national and internationally based producers, production companies, financiers, and agents to actively engage with Northern Ireland resident screen talent.
- We intend to find and develop new and emerging writing, directing, and producing talent to the point that it is of interest to the wider film, television, and interactive content industry.

Skills Strategy for Interactive

- We will expand the Undergrad and Graduate placement schemes to welcome students from any FE/HE institute in Northern Ireland.
- We will support Undergrad placements to a higher level to encourage companies to take on students.
- We will continue The Pixel Mill trainee programme and adapt to meet skills gaps within the sector and adjacent sectors.
- Trainees covering QA/Producing, Art, Programming, Sound, and Community Management will continue to be a resource which all companies can access through The Pixel Mill.
- When opportunities present themselves we will explore a Multiscreen Freelancer initiative.
- We will run a Senior Creative Leadership programme.
- We will continue to deliver a range of workshops led by industry professionals addressing niche skills with video games development.
- We will continue to deliver training programmes which address specific skills gaps within the sector.

BFI Skills Cluster

The **SCREEN** skills cluster is funded by National Lottery funding from the British Film Institute (BFI) and delivered by Northern Ireland Screen in consultation with industry. The Skills cluster will support the skills development and professional growth of local crew and aspiring crew with activities guided by a steering group and delivered through three distinct strands of activity;

- Pathways - bridging the gap between education and the screen industry;
- Continuous Professional Development for local crew;
- Innovation and Technology - future proofing Northern Ireland's screen industry

As the program transitions to the 24-25 activity period, key learnings from the first year will guide enhancements, such as a focus on larger and more extensive programmes. Stakeholder relationships with training providers and further education colleges have been actively cultivated, with plans for expansion in the upcoming year. The delivery approach for year two remains consistent, with a commitment to assessing the impact of training activities on industry professionals. Overall, the Skills Cluster initiative demonstrates adaptability, responsiveness to industry needs, and a commitment to fostering a skilled and diverse workforce.

Development Activity

This development activity is largely supported by the BFI under the UK-wide banner Network.

The initiatives and their place in the intended progression from 'New' to 'Established':

Activity	Type	New	→	Emerging	→	Established
Networkshops	Development and networking					
Development Seminars	Development and networking					
Two Minute Masterpiece (with the BBC)	Production (fiction)					
Bridging the Gap (with the SDI)	Production (factual)					
Individual Short Film Production Awards	Production					
New Shorts Focus	Development and production					
New Writer Focus	Development					
Belfast Readings	Networking					
Director and Producer shadowing (Indi Film / local drama)	Placement					
Creative Animation	Production					
Company Short Film Production Awards	Production					
Script Development Awards	Development					
Director and Producer shadowing (Network Drama)	Placement					
London Readings	Development					
New Talent Focus	Production					
Northern Ireland Talent Showcase	Networking					
Director and Producer shadowing (Large-scale)	Placement					

Networkshops – A structured series of practitioner led seminars aimed at new filmmakers to give them practical insights into filmmaking from development through to distribution. Emphasis is given to demystifying funding, building creative teams, and working with producers.

Development seminars – A series of seminars aimed at new writers, directors and producers to give them practical insights into various aspects of the development process (e.g. beat sheets, writing comedy for children etc).

Two Minute Masterpiece – a partnership with BBC Arts and BBC NI to give new Northern Ireland resident creative talent from underrepresented groups an opportunity to make two-minute short films that are then made available to a national and global audience on BBC iPlayer.

Bridging the Gap – Over the past 6 years Northern Ireland Screen and the Scottish Documentary Institute have partnered under the Bridging the Gap banner to give new Northern Ireland resident creative documentary makers, an opportunity to make short documentaries that are screened nationally through the SDI festival strategy.

Individual Short Film Production Awards – Awards with as few strings attached as possible under Lottery rules to allow new writer/directors to deliver a slightly more ambitious film. Northern Ireland Screen runs two calls per year.

New Shorts Focus – An initiative to find and develop new filmmakers. Priority is given to filmmakers from communities that are underrepresented in the film and television industry.

New Writer Focus – The aim of the New Writer Focus scheme is to provide an opportunity for writers new to feature film to develop a polished feature length script.

Belfast Readings – Un-produced scripts (usually from New Writer Focus) are selected to be read by actors for an invited industry audience of local producers and production companies. Northern Ireland Screen flies in financiers and agents from London to attend.

Director and Producer Shadowing (independent film / local drama) – A placement and mentoring scheme where participants are engaged as the producer or director's assistant on a Northern Ireland Screen independent film or local television drama (e.g. *Hope Street*) for at least the duration of a production's shoot but also, preferably, during pre-production and post-production where possible.

Creative Animation – An initiative to encourage established animation companies to work with new and emerging animation talent.

Company Short Film Production Awards – Awards for writer/directors working with producers through established production companies. Northern Ireland Screen runs two calls per year.

Script Development Awards – The intention is to develop feature film and television drama scripts. The awards are assessed on; the quality of the proposed project; the track record of the creative team; the source, availability, and level of match funding.

Director and Producer Shadowing (Network Drama) – A placement and mentoring scheme where participants are engaged as the producer or director’s assistant on a Northern Ireland Screen funded Network Drama (e.g. *Line of Duty*) for at least the duration of a production’s shoot but also, preferably, during pre-production and post-production where possible.

London Readings – each year two un-produced scripts are selected to be read in London by actors for an invited industry audience of producers, production companies, financiers, and agents.

New Talent Focus – The intention is to produce one feature length film directed by an emerging director. The assessment criteria are quality of the proposed script/project; the quality of the director’s short films; the producer’s track record; viability of the project in terms of ambition against budget; how the film will directly influence the creative team’s immediate career objectives.

Northern Ireland Talent Showcase in London – The best of the year’s short films and a feature are screened to an invited industry audience.

Director and Producer Shadowing (large-scale) – Participants are engaged as the producer or director’s assistant on a Northern Ireland Screen funded large-scale project (e.g. *Dungeons and Dragons*) for at least the duration of a production’s shoot but also, preferably, during pre-production and post-production where possible.

Together the initiatives are intended to provide a clear pathway that new and emerging creative teams can follow from short films to feature film development and the New Talent Focus feature film. While participants can join, and leave, at any point, it does allow for alumni to get a clear idea of where they are on that journey.

CINE: Creative Industries New Entrant Scheme

The Creative Industries New Entrants programme (CINE) is a new initiative which aims to broaden access to the screen and creative industries at entry level. Funded by the Department for Communities and delivered in partnership with BBC Northern Ireland, the scheme will help identify new talent. In line with UK-wide screen industry initiatives we will prioritise applicants from under-represented ethnic minority, socio-economic and disabled communities, to expand our growing creative industries sector and create a more diverse generation of ‘New Entrants’ of all ages.

- CINE is run by CINE Ltd a wholly owned subsidiary of the BBC. The BBC and Northern Ireland Screen are represented on the Board of CINE Ltd. That Board manages the governance, finances and strategy of CINE.
- Northern Ireland Screen is subcontracted to deliver the CINE programme subject to the oversight of the Board of CINE Ltd.
- CINE participants will receive formal training covering necessary skills relevant to the role they are interested in. For example, production techniques, idea generation, technical skills, communication skills and teamwork.
- They will then be given the opportunity to put these skills into practice in paid 12-18 month industry placements. Training plans and a mentor will be provided to support the participants during their placements.
- At the end of their time on CINE, participants should be well equipped for a career within the Northern Ireland creative industries.

- CINE intends to create up to 100 training and job opportunities by March 2025. In 2022-23 **48** new entrant placement opportunities were created. In 23-24 a further **45** placements were created bringing the total of new entrant opportunities to **93** from a total of **1,942** applications received. A good mix of diversity was achieved, with some successful applicants falling into more than one category - Disability **41** (46%), Ethnicity-**12** (16%), Lower Socio-economic **64** (73%). **1,319** people are now registered on the CINE database. There are no plans for any new recruitments in 2024-25 however, a greater focus on finding opportunities for retention of existing trainees with their current placement companies including adding to the **20** trainees who had their current contracts extended in 2023-24. We will provide more support for CINE participants with bespoke training programmes.
- The emphasis for 2024-25 will be in creating a suite of Level 2 OCN's that will give under-represented communities an introduction to the Creative Industries. Delivered by VCO's across NI, we will seek out appropriate partners who work exclusively within the outreach to assist us both with the identification of appropriate candidates and the management of their ongoing needs.

Lottery Funding

Film is a designated good cause within the National Lottery Act 1998. Northern Ireland Screen has delegated responsibility from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland to disperse this funding. The funding has been significantly reduced for the year 24-25 and the priority for Lottery Funding has been narrowed to focus exclusively on Short Film⁵.

SHORT FILM

Short film support which is designed to encourage Northern Ireland-resident producers to make a significant contribution to developing talent within the local industry and to develop Northern Ireland-resident creative talent (writer, director, producer teams) who intend to work professionally in factual or fiction genres. The second priority is support of Northern Ireland resident new writers through the New Writer Focus scheme to develop a feature length script.

Marketing

Marketing plays an important strategic role within Northern Ireland Screen, supporting the various departments within the agency to achieve their key objectives.

Marketing activity underlines all departmental priorities and objectives with a remit to promote Northern Ireland as a major production location, to celebrate Northern Ireland product, talent and culture to the world and to ensure that a range of learning opportunities are delivered so that growing numbers of people in Northern Ireland are motivated to enjoy, understand and explore the moving image. Marketing activity is clearly channelled to meet the needs of the Sector or Northern Ireland Screen focus with varying degrees of emphasis and expenditure.

These Sectors/Areas of Focus are:

- Large-Scale Production;
- Animation and Children's Drama;
- Television Drama;
- Irish Language and Ulster-Scots;
- Factual/Entertainment Television;
- Careers/Education.
- Independent Film including Feature Docs;
- Games/Interactive;
- Skills;
- Archive;
- Exhibition;

Marketing continues to have a big focus on getting people out to markets across all sectors. In 2024-25 we will explore opportunities to increase visibility of Northern Ireland product and talent at such markets. Marketing also continues to work with Tourism NI and Tourism Ireland to assist with the development of Screen Tourism.

⁵ Aside from New Writer Focus individual awards, script development is now exclusively funded through the Northern Ireland Screen Fund supported by DfE

HOW WE DO IT

Education

Creative Learning Centres

Northern Ireland Screen remains committed to maximising the educational value of the screen industries for the benefit of everyone and will continue to focus on the provision of programmes and services that target the marginalised and most disadvantaged schools and communities.

We will support Northern Ireland's three Creative Learning Centres (CLCs) who offer integrated creative and digital technology skills programmes for teachers, youth and community leaders and young people to build sustainability in schools and the youth sector. By empowering teachers, the CLCs are encouraging a step change into life-long learning across our schools, youth, and community organisations with the new creative learning approaches of the digital age.

Schools improving their digital capacity are supported through the CLC's Partnership Programme, which promotes whole school development, offering all-staff training and in-class support to teachers over an academic year as they integrate digital creativity with their lessons. Schools applying to the Partnership Programme can specialise in areas such as film and animation, coding or digital design and are given access to cutting edge technologies across gaming, robotics and AR/VR.

Targets will be specified in funding agreements to ensure that disadvantaged schools are prioritised and that the long-term improvement of digital literacy and creativity in teachers and young people across the curriculum is effectively measured.

Into Film Programme

The Into Film Programme, free to all in Northern Ireland, seeks to fully realise the educational, cultural, and social power of film and games in children and young people's development. An enhanced funding package from the Department for Communities ensures additional support for schools operating in areas of disadvantage in the provision of screen-based education.

Alongside cinema screenings and resources and training to support classroom teaching, Northern Ireland Screen has undertaken a recalibration of the programme to embed film and games education within schools alongside a more modernised and agile approach that focuses on the development of high quality cross-curricular resources such as Story Builder that can be used in the classroom by a range of teachers.

The expansion of the Into Film+ streaming service allows for engaging sessions, live events and dedicated wrap around content, serving to make the stories and storytellers more accessible to young people. Continued investment in young audiences who have access to, and the ability to respond to a vast array of content from around the world will continue to encourage the most engaged, inquisitive, and informed audiences possible.

Into Film will highlight the growth of the screen industries in NI and will continue to inform, support, and inspire teachers, highlighting the benefits of incorporating screen medium into their practices and showcase the wealth of opportunities within the local screen industries. Into Film will continue to provide teacher training with online learning, Face to Face CPD, individual school support and targeted curriculum-based resources which bring creativity to life in the classroom.

Schools in areas of disadvantage will be prioritised and will benefit from intensive bespoke attention and support. A combination of teacher training, workshops, screenings, and industry engagement will ensure that we deliver targeted support with tangible outcomes, dedicating expertise and adding value in the classroom. Licensing provision will remain in place to ensure that schools retain full access to the Into Film+ catalogue.

Careers/Work Experience

Delivering on our strategic objective to strengthen the pathways into the screen industries, Northern Ireland Screen has prioritised the need for young people, schools, youth groups, teachers and parents from all social backgrounds to better understand the career opportunities in the screen industries and the pathways to those careers.

ScreenWorks

The main method of delivery for **ScreenWorks** will continue to be practical, physical work experience, working alongside industry professionals to learn about careers in the screen industries over a 3-5 day across all five screen sectors - Film, Television, Animation, Gaming and Visual Effects.

Into Film will deliver programmes over an academic year, providing hands-on experience for 1,650 young people aged 14-19 alongside careers advice and guidance, online content and the delivery of Industry Q&A Sessions will complement the core work experience programme.

Screen Academies

Screen Academies is an intensive programme providing industry training, mentoring and hands-on experience of key job roles across the Film, Animation, VFX and Gaming industries. The key objectives of the Screen Academies are:

- To establish an entry route for over 200 young people aged 16-19 into the screen industries;
- To address the current skills gap in the different sectors of the local screen industries;
- To offer participants direct access to industry training and mentoring provided by skilled personnel within local companies and talented freelancers working professionally on local and international productions.

Northern Ireland Screen will work closely with Into Film and the Nerve Centre in refining the ScreenWorks and Screen Academies programmes to ensure that it continues to provide young people in Northern Ireland the opportunity to experience and explore screen craft and technical roles through a range of unique experiences.

Into Film and the Nerve Centre will ensure that participants are representative of a wide range of social backgrounds across diversity, disability and socio-economic. Both ScreenWorks and Screen Academies participants will be signposted to relevant progression routes across further and higher education as well as our own CINE new entrant programme and ongoing Skills and Trainee opportunities.

Education for Interactive

Kippie CIC will continue to deliver **Girls Make Games** which is an educational programme designed and led by Kippie to inspire the next generation of designers, creators and engineers. Open to girls aged between 11 and 14, the after-school, four week-long course introduces students to the skills needed to make their own computer game. Through a mixture of classroom and practical learning experiences the students will learn how to use Gamemaker, a free 2D game engine, and how to use illustration software Procreate on iPad. The course will also include talks from local industry experts alongside tours of game development studios.

- Alongside our existing partners, we will work with NextGen Skills Academy, BAFTA, and UKIE alongside industry to increase awareness of career pathways as well as improving access to games education within schools.
- Secondary – we will engage with CCEA on how to deliver more exposure of video games production within schools through the introduction of games into Moving Image Arts or other means.

HOW WE DO IT

CULTURE

Irish Language Broadcast Fund

The broadened remit of the Fund in 2021/22 from DCMS/BFI through New Decade New Approach (NDNA) was a one-off uplift and we will continue to engage to ensure confirmation of continuity of the Fund beyond the current (and fourth) one-year extension of our previous 4-year Strategy. The new funding received from Department of Tourism Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media (DTCAGSM) through NDNA was a 3-year package to 2023, with confirmation received that the €1 million will continue in 2024. We are engaging with DTCAGSM to have this funding continue on a longer-term basis.

Similarly to Screen Fund, crew availability, crew costs and increased cost of living will continue to impact on the number of projects that we will be able to support in the coming year. We will continue to manage expectations within the sector and with broadcasters to ensure continued development of the sector and to ensure we meet our KPIs.

The Fund will finance a minimum of 60 hours of Irish language moving image content per year for broadcast on BBC Northern Ireland, TG4 and RTÉ as well as content which will be available on digital platforms. The Fund will aim to support 10 hours of Irish language radio content per year for broadcast on locally available radio stations. The Fund will continue to support a range of training and skills initiatives to further develop the local Irish language production sector. The ILBF will continue to support a variety of programming for broadcast, with continued emphasis on development of content for the second screen, for language learners and for young people. Support for the development of the Irish language drama sector here will continue with the support of drama development and production initiatives in conjunction with broadcasters BBC, TG4 and Fís Éireann. Support for the Amharc scheme for arts documentaries will also continue. The growth of the existing local Irish language production sector continues to be a key priority for the ILBF and emphasis on international co-productions will continue.

Within ILBF we also seek to secure sustainable practices and all ILBF funded projects must secure Albert certification and/or have a sustainability plan in place.

Update on Implementation of ILBF Evaluation Recommendations:

Many of the recommendations in the most recent ILBF evaluation were already being implemented by the organisation, therefore we have outlined below updates on outstanding recommendations.

- Government support: There are ongoing discussions with BFI and DTCAGSM regarding ongoing and multi-year funding.
- ILBF Training and Trainee Support: Glúin Nua scheme ongoing. Skills support ongoing in New Entrant scheme – 6 TV and 1 Radio Trainee on this year's scheme - and Trainee AP schemes. All ILBF trainees are in regular contact with ILBF Officers to ensure they receive adequate support from us and from their placement companies. Short term training courses also used to address training needs, including focus on resilience.
- Educational Content recommendation: Following last year's event in March which brought together relevant educational stakeholders, including broadcasters and the production sector to raise awareness of the type of content needed and the language level required, there was a marked increase in the quality of the applications received in the audio and digital round. 3 Maths resources, a poetry resource and several projects focused on the World Around Us were supported.
- General content recommendations: Producers' Day held in January where ILBF priorities were communicated to production sector; no. of hours of digital content supported is now recorded alongside television and audio content; RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta again supported content in the 2023 audio round alongside BBC Radio Ulster; continuing to support applications with international production and broadcast partners; drama development and production supported.

- ILBF portal: This is being researched.
- Capturing feedback on projects (audience satisfaction and wider economic and cultural benefits of fund): We are currently developing a diverse and inclusive audience panel for ILBF funded content. This will be alongside our regular qualitative audience research and collating of information on Final Progress Reports which captures NI spend and number of Irish speakers working on productions.

Some recommendations were dependent on increased funding and multiyear funding which we don't currently have, and we were therefore not able to implement – including multi series awards for production companies to provide more sustainability and stability; more development funding for sector; an additional staff member.

Targets for 2024-25 include:

- 60 hours of locally produced Irish Language television content for local broadcast and beyond plus 10 hours of audio content;
- An average cost per minute to ILBF across all programming of £900 per minute;
- Continued emphasis on maintaining the linguistic integrity with minimum language levels of 75%;
- 7 x new entrant trainee places (6 TV & 1 Radio) will be supported on year-long schemes whilst 4 x trainee assistant producers will be supported for 1 year and 2 trainee video journalists will also be supported year;
- Develop the local Irish Language drama sector through the support of low budget drama initiatives with broadcasters and Fís Éireann to encourage new Irish speaking talent;
- Increased emphasis on the support of content aimed at young people, language learners and interactive/second screen content;
- Increased emphasis on the growth of the existing Irish language production sector through targeted funding and training support initiatives. Particular emphasis on co-production/co-broadcast opportunities with Scotland, Wales and Canada and on developing content for an international market;
- Continuation of our relationship with local TV station NTV to produce Irish Language content for local community television broadcast;
- Continue to provide funding for relevant training courses for the Irish speaking production sector through the Skills Fund;
- Continuation of training provided through Raidió Fáilte.

Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund

The Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund (USBF) will continue to support a variety of programming for broadcast with at least 10 hours of Ulster-Scots programming being commissioned.

The overarching aim of the USBF remains as the need to ensure that the heritage, culture and language of Ulster-Scots are expressed through moving image which includes broadcast and interactive content. As a support to the primary aim, the Fund is also open to supporting radio content produced for BBC Radio Ulster, other local commercial and/or community radio stations. The Fund increased to £2 million for one year only in 2021-22 but has since reverted to the original £1m level. This static level of funding will continue to impact the ability to develop drama and language projects and those aimed at younger audiences in 2024-25 and beyond. It will also continue to reduce the amount of TV, radio and digital content awarded funding in 2024-25.

The development of the Ulster-Scots independent production sector in Northern Ireland including the development of creative talent remains a priority for the Fund. The USBF Trainee Scheme was introduced in 2017-18 and has led to the development of nine Ulster-Scots content producers, the majority of which are now employed in the sector. Two new trainees recruited for Year 6 of the scheme are currently in placement with production companies and will complete the scheme in February 2025. The scheme will be continued into 2024-25 with the recruitment of at least 1 new trainee.

The USBF has increased its focus on digital projects that do not require a television broadcast partner. The focus on digital projects will continue with this category of project becoming the second largest in monetary terms behind the projects delivered in partnership with BBC NI.

Whilst the creation of Ulster-Scots content for a Northern Ireland audience remains a priority, the USBF working alongside key broadcasters will continue to seek opportunities for programming that can reach a national and international audience. The Fund has launched a Development Call around the 250th anniversary of the US Declaration of Independence in 2026 with specific remit to reach an American audience. It also funded RTE documentary **Andrew Trimble: For Ulster & Ireland** broadcast to great acclaim and in February and is continuing discussions with TG4 to develop a new Ulster-Scots strand of acquired and original programming for the channel.

The USBF will also seek to secure sustainable practices and mirror those adopted by the Screen Fund e.g. Albert Sustainable Production.

Targets for 2024-25 include:

- Deliver 10 additional hours of Ulster-Scots programming;
- Deliver 2 Ulster-Scots radio programmes;
- Deliver 5 online projects;
- Deliver Development Funding for a landmark TV documentary or series around the 250th Anniversary of the US Declaration of Independence in 2026 for the American and/or UK network market;
- Continue to develop broadcasting opportunities with RTE and TG4 in Ireland;
- Broadcast 90% of the USBF funded programming within 9 months of delivery;
- Reach a significant Northern Ireland audience, primarily but not exclusively through broadcast television, with an average per programme audience target of 40,000 people in Northern Ireland (target is an average across all the programming supported by the USBF applied to each 12-month period);
- Continued support for the USBF Trainee scheme.

Film Culture, Exhibition and Audiences

Northern Ireland Screen provides core funding to the key cultural film festivals across Northern Ireland: the annual Belfast Film Festival; Docs Ireland - the documentary film festival organised and delivered by Belfast Film Festival; Cinemagic Film Festival for young people; Foyle Film Festival in the North West and Northern Ireland's only cultural cinema, Queen's Film Theatre (QFT) in Belfast. This group of organisations – the 'exhibition sector' - provides the public with access to screen culture, less accessible film releases and importantly, acts as a showcase for new releases of film made in Northern Ireland. The exhibition sector has worked well in demonstrating the links between film culture, education, skills development and economic value that are critically important to Northern Ireland Screen's integrated strategy.

The exhibition sector has recently been evaluated as being a 'high value-added sector' with festival and cinema attendance being a vital element of the Department for Communities success in meeting its Programme for Government target for cultural access and was the highest percentage of any artform. The entire Northern Ireland Screen Exhibition programme through its funded festivals and QFT was seen to be consistent with DfC's objectives, particularly with the important role of audience development.

Belfast Film Festival celebrates and promotes the work of all new directors and writers; Cinemagic delivers a month-long festival for young people and family audiences; Foyle Film Festival has an extensive education and culturally focused programme in the North West; and, QFT, as well as being highly successful and the only cultural cinema in Northern Ireland, hosts Film Hub NI, the BFI lottery funded initiative supporting regional screen culture and provides resources and support to cultural cinema exhibition across the whole of Northern

Ireland. This connected approach is also strongly illustrated in the Docs Ireland festival which has been designed to serve audiences, new talent and the burgeoning Feature Documentary sector here.

Northern Ireland Screen is committed to collaborating with all our specialist exhibition providers to ensure that audiences, particularly young and hard-to-reach audiences, have regular opportunities to see a wider range of film and moving image material, including film made in Northern Ireland, film and television from the past, and examples of independent and world cinema.

The development of *Belfast Stories*, a new visitor attraction will include a home for the screen industries as well as a state-of-the-art five-screen cinema complex. The centre will bring together the educational, cultural and industrial aspects of the screen industry to an extent unique across the world and will include provision for the future of Northern Ireland moving image archive and working, networking and training facilities to ensure Northern Ireland's screen industry continues to grow and foster new creative talent. Primacy within the mix at the Screen Centre will be access for young people to digital skills and creativity.

In 2024-25, we will focus on the following:

- **AUDIENCES:** We will work across the Exhibition Sector, Film Hub NI, Into Film, BFI and others to develop audiences across NI, providing more opportunities to see the widest possible range of film and digital content, including those made by the wealth of home-grown creative talent.
- **EDUCATION, PATHWAYS AND SKILLS:** We will encourage the Exhibition Sector to support and promote skills, education and engagement across all of their activity building on the screen education programming of the Nerve Centre, Amma Centre, Cinemagic and Into Film;
- **ARCHIVE:** We will encourage the Exhibition Sector to promote and showcase archive content and, in particular, to assist us in showcasing the value of our strategic partnerships with BFI, BAI, UTV and PRONI.

Heritage and Archive

Digitisation, Preservation and Cataloguing: Working across the areas of moving image archive, culture, education, skills, outreach, and audience development, collaborative working is integral to the work and success of the Heritage and Archive department.

In recent years there has been a strong focus on preservation-led projects. These efforts were motivated by a recognition of the ever-shrinking opportunity to digitise 'at-risk' analogue formats. To this end, Northern Ireland Screen has participated in large-scale initiatives, such as the BFI's Videotape Digitisation scheme, through which almost 7,000 videotape items were digitised for long-term preservation.

Participation in such initiatives has resulted in an exponential increase in the size of the Digital Film Archive (DFA). Comprising 1,000 digitised assets in 2016, by the close of 2023-24 the DFA comprised more than 12,000 items relating to Northern Ireland's moving image culture.

In 2024-25, Northern Ireland Screen will seek to realise the public value of these digitised materials, with a concerted focus on a broad range of public engagement activities, including community and cultural outreach and archive educational programmes. We will aim to ensure the widest possible access to screen heritage and ensure that our collections are available as a living resource, to be used by educationalists, researchers and the creative and exhibition sectors.

We will also seek to increase representation within the Digital Film Archive through collecting and public engagement activities that champion equality, diversity and inclusion.

UTV Archive Partnership: Under the UTV Archive Partnership, Northern Ireland Screen and the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) – supported by ITV and DfC – have been working to safeguard the UTV archive for future generations, whilst ensuring that the collection's cultural and educational value can be realised by

audiences today. As part of this Partnership Agreement, PRONI is solely responsible for the preservation of the UTV digital assets and original film and tape. With the first five-year phase of the UTV Archive Partnership completed in June 2023, the partners negotiated an initial extension of the agreement until end-2024, in line with the expiry of UTV's broadcast license. Subject to OFCOM granting UTV a new license, a further multi-year extension of the Partnership will be formalised.

Digitisation, Preservation and Cataloguing Targets for 2024-25 include:

- DIGITISATION: 200 analogue items digitised;
- PRESERVATION: Implementation of new cloud storage solution to further safeguard digitised assets;
- CATALOGUING: 600 (minimum) items catalogued and made publicly accessible via DFA;
- NI NOW: Rollout of Northern Ireland Screen's innovative contemporary collecting project will continue, with a target of 120 new audiovisual works acquired, catalogued and preserved within the Digital Film Archive.

Outreach and Public Engagement

The Digital Film Archive Outreach Programme is a popular and highly valued service provided free of charge at community level. The programme is tailored to meet the needs of a variety of audiences, showcasing the educational, cultural and wellbeing value of moving image archive. We would propose continuing this core service in 2024-25, maintaining a focus on delivering activity to the most vulnerable members of our society, using the Digital Film Archive and technology to counter loneliness and enhance wellbeing amongst an aging population. In particular, we wish to further develop the use of archive materials in dementia services, utilising moving image heritage as a therapeutic engagement tool.

We are also keen to explore how we can better utilise collections to maximise educational outcomes and further our contribution to schools, lifelong learning, and HE institutions. This includes the ongoing development of curriculum-linked archive resources.

Complementing our core outreach work, a programme of curated public engagement activities – exhibitions, talks, screenings, creative response projects – will enhance collaborative working across all strands of the project and allow us to build lasting partnerships between the archive, film-exhibition and cultural sectors.

Outreach and Public Engagement Targets for 2024-25 include:

- 80 core community outreach and education events per annum;
- 10 UTV-focussed public engagement events;
- NI NOW – 12 community group partners recruited, and 48 workshops delivered;
- 5,000 accumulated audience for above activities;
- Launch of curriculum-linked online archive resources.

Key Performance Indicators for Business Plan 2024-25 - Year 3 of Stories, Skills & Sustainability 2022-26

Screen Fund Production and Development	KPI 2022-26
Northern Ireland Screen Fund committed	£53,400,000
Direct Spend	£431,000,000
Northern Ireland Spend	Ratio
Large-Scale Production	14.5:1
Animation and Children's	7.0:1
Television Drama	7.5:1
Factual/Entertainment Television	6.0:1
Independent Film/Feature Doc	3.0:1
Interactive	5.0:1
Northern Ireland Crew on Productions	Target
60% of NI Crew on Large-Scale production	60%
40% of NI HoD on Large-Scale production	40%
75% of NI Crew on other production	75%
65% of NI HoD on other production	65%
Projects	Target
90% of production projects (by value) to secure investment and distribution from the UK market and 75% from the international market	90% 75%
Annual increase in the number of female leaders in above the line roles (writer/director/producer or equivalent dependent on sector)	
Support projects that will utilise virtual production/XR/AR or other innovative technologies and seek to increase the number of projects annually	
Skills	Target
70 Trainees on Northern Ireland Screen's payroll across our Company Placement, Craft & Technical, Animation and Pixel Mill schemes	70
Provide up to 25 Skills bursary awards addressing the training needs of our creative industries	25
Provide 45 Stepping Up opportunities for crew across all sectors	45
Provide Bespoke & New Entrant Training for up to 50 candidates	50
Provide up to 8 Director/Producer Shadowing opportunities	8

Retain 75% of trainees in the industry after 1 year of completing traineeship (based on trainees funded from April 2022 and measured across the strategy 2022-26)	75%
CINE	Target
Create up to 100 New Entrant jobs to support organisational and sectoral recovery specifically targeting individuals from disabled, ethnic or lower social economic backgrounds by March 2025 with no fixed annual target	93 Trainees Ethnicity: 12 Disability: 42 Lower Socio: 64 NB: Some trainees fall into more than 1 category
Enable New Entrants to fulfil their potential by delivering information and educational workshops, industry appropriate training and designing structured training plans by March 2025	344
Sustainability	Target
Introduce food waste reduction measures on large scale and High-End TV (HETV).	18 Projects
Development of a digital platform that promotes circular economy procedures within the screen industry	System in place by March 2025
Ensure all majority funded projects comply with Bafta Albert	100%
Increased application of hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO) on large scale and High-End TV (HETV) projects	500,000 Litres
Northern Ireland Studio facilities participation in the Albert Studio Sustainability Standard	1
Further growth of the sustainability department through continued training and placement of Northern Screen Sustainability Trainees	1 trainee
Northern Screen trainees must complete Albert online Sustainable production training.	100%
Deliver a regularly updated online resource to help productions source sustainable products and services	Updated Monthly
New & Emerging Talent	Target
300 Individuals to engage with BFI Network directly through hub professional activity	300
Ensure a diversity of funding: target 50:50 / male: female identifying awardees	50:50 split
70% of filmmakers to agree that the event they attended delivered what they hoped	70%
Creative Learning Centres (CLCs)	Participants
CLCs to deliver Partnership Programmes in 45 schools	45
Engage 150 schools across the 3 CLCs	150

135 teachers trained annually in Partnership Programmes (3 per school) with *60% having developed new creative technology and digital media skills	135 60%
30 Moving Image Arts teachers trained annually with *70% enhanced their capacity to teach MIA	30 70%
720 teachers trained annually through 120 professional learning programmes with *60% having increased their confidence to use creative technology and digital media in their classroom setting	720 60%
3,150 young people actively engaged in delivery of CLC Partnership Programme (70 per school) with *60% having developed new creative technology and digital media skills	3,150 60%
600 young people actively engaged in CLC programming outside of school	600
At least 70% of CLC Partnership Programmes in areas of disadvantage	70%
*% outcomes will be measured by the end of the academic year (June 2025)	
Into Film	Target
225 teachers trained annually in Into Film programming (3 per school) with 60% having increased their confidence in using Film and/or Games in their teaching practice	225 60%
1,650 young people actively engaged in Into Film programming (22 per class/school) with 60% stating the resources developed having enhanced their learning experience	1,650 60%
75 Schools actively engaged with the Into Film Programme	75
1,000 Into Film Story Builder resources distributed	1,000
At least 65% of Into Film delivery in areas of disadvantage	65%
Cinemagic	Target
Cinemagic to deliver Key Stage 3 careers programme across 10 schools and 160 young people with 60% having increased their overall awareness of the local screen industries because of the support provided	160 60%
Cinemagic to deliver animation programmes targeting 6 SEN schools with 50% of teachers indicating they have seen a positive change in the aspirations of the young people following the support provided	6 50%
Work Experience	Target
Delivery of 30 ScreenWorks work experience programmes annually for 450 young people aged 14-19 across NI with 60% having identified a potential future career pathway into the screen industry	450 60%

Delivery of 4 Screen Academies for 210 young people aged 16-19 covering Film, Animation, VFX and Games with 70% improved their understanding of the technical and creative skills required by industry	210 70%
Exhibition	Target
150,000 audience members to attend screenings and events at QFT, Belfast Film Festival, Docs Ireland, Foyle Film Festival and Cinemagic Festival	150,000
5% of festival screening and cinema attendance from marginalised groups (7,500 participants)	5% 7,500
Deliver 2,800 screenings and events across the Exhibition sector with 20% of films and events involving home grown talent	20% 2,800
Archive	Target
5,000 participants for Digital Film Archive public engagement activities	5,000
Delivery of 48 contemporary collecting workshops	48
200 analogue items digitised and preserved	200
120 contemporary audiovisual works acquired	120
600 items catalogued and published to DFA	600
300TB archive digital assets migrated to/stored in Cloud storage	300TB
12 archive curriculum-linked resources published	12
ILBF	Target
60 hours television content broadcast to 25,000+ people in N Ireland	60
10 hours of audio content supported & broadcast	10
Broad range of content supported to include digital/interactive and audio	
100% of all programmes delivered to be broadcast	100%
7 Trainees - New Entrant Trainee Scheme with Local Production Companies and Northern Visions. Sep 23 - August 24, (6 TV, 1 Trainee Radio Producer placed with BBC Radio Ulster & Raidió Failte)	7
7 Trainees - New Entrant Trainee Scheme with Local Production Companies and Northern Visions. Sep 24 - August 25, (6 TV, 1 Trainee Radio Producer placed with BBC Radio Ulster & Raidió Failte)	7

4 Trainee APs and 2 Trainee Video Journalists and 1 Trainee Animation Co-Ordinator	7
80% of all trainees to secure employment in the sector on completion of training scheme	80%
USBF	Target
Deliver 10 additional hours of Ulster-Scots programming	10
Deliver 2 Ulster-Scots radio projects	2
Deliver 5 online projects	5
Recruit at least 1 trainee by February 2025	1
Broadcast 90% of programming within 9 months of delivery	90%
Reach a significant Northern Ireland audience, with an average per programme audience target of 40,000 people in Northern Ireland (target is an average across all the programming supported by the USBF applied to each 12-month period)	40,000
Retain 75% of trainees in the industry after 1 year of completing traineeship (measured across the strategy 2022-26)	75%

Northern Ireland Screen Budget 2024-2025	
Income	
DfC	£ 1,999,000
DfE	£ 18,792,000
Skills Company Contribution	£ 380,000
Recoupment	£ 500,000
Irish Language Broadcast Fund inc TCAGSM	£ 4,087,166
Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund	£ 1,080,000
Arts Council NI Lottery Fund	£ 125,000
British Film Institute	£ 160,000
BBC CINES	£ 1,600,000
Other Income	£ 100,000
BFI Skills Cluster	£ 300,000
TOTAL Income	£ 29,123,166
Expenditure	
DfE	
Screen Fund inc Development	£ 13,350,000
Skills	£ 2,100,000
Marketing Activity	£ 540,000
Production Legal Fees	£ 212,858
Salaries and Overheads	£ 2,589,142
	£ 18,792,000
Additional Income re DfE Program	
Skills Company Contribution	£ 380,000
Recoupment	£ 500,000
Arts Council	
Lottery Awards & Expenditure	£ 125,000
	£ 125,000
Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund	
Production Awards	£ 904,776
Expenses & Salaries	£ 134,484
Overheads	£ 40,740
	£ 1,080,000
Irish Language Broadcast Fund	
Production Awards	£ 3,316,559
Training	£ 378,490
Overheads	£ 392,117
	£ 4,087,166
DfC	
Creative Learning Centres	£ 773,530
Into Film	£ 341,020
Screen Academies	£ 126,450
Exhibition Sector	£ 361,700
Digital Film Archive	£ 316,500
Education Activities	£ 79,800
	£ 1,999,000
British Film Institute	
British Film Institute	£ 160,000
	£ 160,000
BBC	
Creative Industries New Entrants Scheme	£ 1,600,000
	£ 1,600,000
Other Income	
Other income	£ 100,000
	£ 100,000
BFI Skills Cluster	
Awards	£ 240,000
Overheads	£ 60,000
	£ 300,000
Surplus/(Deficit)	£ -

Northern Ireland Screen is sponsored by the Department for the Economy (DfE).

Primary funding for Northern Ireland Screen in 2024-25 will come from DfE, the Department for Communities (DfC), the British Film Institute (including DCMS funding for Minority Languages), and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland to administer Lottery Film Funding in Northern Ireland. Funding for CINE comes from BBC NI and ultimately from the Department for Communities.

Northern Ireland Screen is required to operate under the terms of the revised Management Statement and Financial Memorandum issued on 23 May 2019; this document sets out the responsibilities and accountability of the organisation as well as aspects of the financial provisions which Northern Ireland Screen must observe:

- Promote and enhance professional standards to meet statutory best practice in equality, corporate governance and work procedures;
- Present the draft Annual Report and Accounts (drawn up in accordance with FREM) for the 2023-24 year for completion by May for departmental consolidation purposes and for audit by early June 2024 and subsequently present to the Board on 25th June 2024;
- Actively review and manage progress against Business Plan objectives via a quarterly tracking and KPI reporting system;
- Review and clear outstanding external and internal audit recommendations;
- Embed risk management procedures further within the organisation;
- Report all frauds (proven or suspected) immediately to DfE;
- Follow DfE guidance on the inclusion of social clauses in all public procurement contracts;
- Regularly review the Business Continuity Plan;
- Deliver on our commitments within the *Stories, Skills and Sustainability Strategy*;
- Provide accurate and timely information to DfE and all other funders as agreed.

The MSFM will be replaced by a Partnership Agreement in 2024/25 financial year.

Governance and Risk Management has a central role within Northern Ireland Screen; we have adopted a risk management strategy which identifies, evaluates and mitigates the risks affecting the organisation. We have put appropriate financial and other arrangements in place to protect Northern Ireland Screen from the consequences of risk. This prudent approach ensures that areas of high risk are identified, and remedial action is taken.

Progress against the business plan will be monitored against KPIs and is reviewed by the Board on a quarterly basis. The supply of monitoring information is a contractual requirement within Third Party Organisation funding agreements and is supplied to Northern Ireland Screen on a quarterly basis.

Equality of Opportunity

In accordance with its Equality Scheme, Northern Ireland Screen has established a system to monitor the impact of policies to identify their effects on relevant S75 groups. If the monitoring shows that a policy results in greater adverse impact than predicted or if opportunities arise to promote greater equality of opportunity, Northern Ireland Screen is committed to revising the policy accordingly.