



Business Plan 2021

(Revised June 2021)

Contents

1 Introduction..... .3

2 Review of Progress Against 2020 Business plan.....5

3 Proposed 2021 Budget and Efficiency Plan 8

4 Strategic priorities for 2021 10

5 Monitoring and Reporting 19

1. Introduction

This Business Plan describes the key elements of the work which the Ulster-Scots Agency proposes to undertake in 2021 in furtherance of the strategic priorities and objectives set out in the Agency's Corporate Plan 2020-2022. The plan was also adjusted in June 2021 to take account of an agreed uplift in the baseline budget of the North South Language Body.

Vision

The vision of the Ulster-Scots Agency is that the rich, vibrant identity and global impact of the Ulster-Scots community should be recognised, respected and embraced at home and abroad.

Mission

The mission of the Ulster-Scots Agency is to inspire and empower people and communities in Ulster to embrace their Ulster-Scots identity, build kinship with those outside Ulster who share our identity and friendship inside Ulster with those who do not.

Core Principles

The Agency is committed to excellence in everything that we do. In working to deliver on our Vision and Mission we will be guided by the following Core Principles:

Authenticity – the Ulster-Scots heritage that we develop and promote will be authentic and will be based on sound knowledge and research on Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture.

Quality – we will seek at all times to present Ulster-Scots in the best possible way, so that we do justice to the fantastic richness of our Ulster-Scots heritage.

Capacity Building – in all of our activities we will work to involve the Ulster-Scots community sector, continuously seeking new opportunities to grow the sector and enhance its capacity.

Partnership – we will develop partnerships across the public, private and community sectors to maximise the skills and resources that can be secured to achieve our mission.

Mainstreaming - we will work to enhance the presence of Ulster-Scots culture and heritage within mainstream cultural institutions such as museums, galleries and heritage centres.

Equality of Opportunity – we will ensure that in the delivery of our work we promote equality of opportunity and good relations.

Poverty – we will look for opportunities to deliver on our mission in ways which can make a difference in disadvantaged communities and ensure that economic barriers do not prevent people from enjoying Ulster-Scots activities.

Social Inclusion – we will look for opportunities to ensure the engagement of those who might be at risk of social exclusion, including young people, the elderly, women and rural communities.

North/South – our remit covers the development and promotion of Ulster-Scots in both Northern Ireland and Ireland; and we will ensure that appropriate attention is paid to the development of Ulster-Scots in the border counties of Ireland, where there is a rich, but underdeveloped Ulster-Scots heritage.

East/West – relationships with Scotland and North America are key to maximising the potential of Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture. Having due regard to resource constraints, we will seek to develop initiatives on an East/West axis which have a positive impact on Ulster-Scots here.

2. Review of Progress against 2020 Business Plan

In common with organisations in all walks of life, the work of the Ulster-Scots Agency was significantly impacted by the Coronavirus pandemic. The Agency worked throughout the year to deliver as much of our core activity as possible, adapting to the changed environment and supporting the Ulster-Scots community. Some of the key impacts of the situation and the Agency's response to it are set out below.

Corporate

The Agency Headquarters in Belfast and our regional office/Discover Ulster-Scots Centre in Raphoe were closed from 18th March, with staff working from home since that date, with only essential access to the office, in line with government guidance in both jurisdictions. The Discover Ulster-Scots Centre in Belfast, as well as the Monreagh Ulster-Scots Heritage Centre at Carrigans, have also been closed for long periods.

Secure server access was quickly established for all staff, so that colleagues were able to work as normally as possible and arrangements were put in place for continuity of telecoms so that service users could contact Agency staff as normal. Video conferencing was also quickly established via a range of platforms, allowing Board and ARC meetings to continue and staff to meet with Sponsor Departments and key stakeholders on an ongoing basis. Alternative provision was put in place to handle financial documentation in a Covid secure way so that stakeholders were not put at risk and we have increased the use of electronic systems to receive grant documentation, most recently with the successful roll out of a pilot electronic grant application process.

Learning

All Agency learning programmes delivered in schools were severely affected by school closures, including Music and Dance Tuition Grants; Flagship Schools; Afterschool Clubs; School Workshops; and School Twinning. In periods when schools were open, their focus was on delivering the core curriculum, in particular literacy and numeracy. Extra-curricular and enrichment activities were not prioritised by many schools. Covid-related arrangements in schools such as maintaining 'bubbles' made it very difficult to put tutors into schools or bring children together from different classes for music/dance tuition.

The Agency adopted a flexible approach by offering face-to-face tuition to those schools wishing to take up the offer and distance learning opportunities for others. Any combination of face-to-face/distance learning has been accommodated by the Agency depending on demand from schools. We are working with education authorities in Northern Ireland to make available a range of Ulster-Scots learning resources using a

variety of platforms. Initially this includes existing resources, but we are also working to develop electronic learning resources on piping, drumming, Lambeg drumming and fife. The electronic resources should be available to all schools via C2K going forward. During the lockdown we also facilitated our first ever transatlantic e-learning opportunity, with schools in NI working on a virtual archaeology project in Maine, USA. The Agency is also working with NI Screen and the Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund to develop a variety of digital content to support learning for school and non-school based audiences.

Community

Restrictions on indoor and outdoor gathering had a huge impact on community activity. The Agency was unable to offer support for Community Festivals or Summer Schools and community-based music and dance tuition projects were significantly disrupted. Several forms of Ulster-Scots cultural expression were particularly badly hit: Scottish Country Dancing cannot be undertaken at social distance due to the physical contact required; and playing of bagpipes and flute were subject to particularly stringent restrictions.

The Agency worked hard to support the Ulster-Scots community in a variety of ways. Most 2019/20 community grants were uplifted to the maximum permissible level, releasing additional cash resources into the sector. Two thirds of music and dance tuition groups were supported to transition to online provision. Additional resources were made available to the Monreagh Ulster-Scots Heritage Centre, Mid Armagh Community Network and our Community Impact partners; and an unprecedented programme of Covid-19 support funding was delivered in the form of small grants, language grants and larger organisation grants, funded through a combination of resources from Ulster-Scots Agency baseline resources and additional funding secured from Department for Communities (DfC), with a combined value of £1.3million, the largest funding programme ever delivered in the Ulster-Scots community.

Although programme delivery in 2020 was dominated by Covid-19 and our response to it, several “normal” achievements were also possible:

- Publication of a new book, Belfast’s Bonnie Burns, which was launched by Minister Hargey during Burns Week in January.
- Development of a series of 24 short films on Ulster-Scots cookery, with TV Chef Paula McIntyre and an accompanying iBook, with a second iBook in progress.
- 200 learners achieved accredited qualifications in Piping and Drumming and Lambeg Drumming; and we also extended our offering by developing new accredited courses in Lambeg Drum and Fife.

- We continued to build relationships with key stakeholders in Scotland and are working with Scots Language Dictionaries to develop an Ulster-Scots Dictionary Project for inclusion in the emerging Ulster-Scots strategy.

3. Proposed 2021 Budget and Efficiency Plan

This business plan is based on a baseline budget of £2,595,681. This reflects the fact that in June 2021, Sponsor Departments agreed an increase of 11.73% in the baseline budget of the North South Language Body. However, due to the timing of the development, the uplift was reduced by 25% in cash terms, with the Agency receiving an additional £206,000 in year. The budget, including the uplift has been profiled against our key work areas as follows:

	2020 Indicative Budget (£)	2021 Proposed Budget (£)
Serving the Community	902,189	880,450
Partnership Working	67,000	80,874
Marketing	150,323	144,645
Education	246,333	241,178
Providing a First Class Service	977,088	995,786
<i>UPLIFT 2021 Serving the Community</i>	0	176,000
<i>UPLIFT 2021 Partnership Working</i>	0	30,000
Total	2,342,933	2,548,933
Additional Pension Contributions DFC	36,256	46,748
Total Budget	2,379,189	2,595,681

DFC	1,793,456	1,958,448
DTCAGSM	585,733	637,233
Total Budget	2,379,189	2,595,681

Budgets based on original 2020 figures plus an uplift in year of £206,000.

The Agency currently has an approved staff complement of 15.77 posts:

- CEO (G7 equivalent)

- 3 Directors (DP equivalent) – Corporate Services; Education & Language; and Development
- 4 Development Officers (SO equivalent)
- 3 SO Corporate Staff (HR/Office Manager; SO Accountant; and Information, Communication & Marketing Manager)
- 3 EO2s (Grants/Marketing/Finance)
- 2 AOs (Admin/Grants)

4. Strategic Priorities for 2021

The Agency's work in 2021 will undoubtedly continue to be affected by Covid-19 to a significant extent. During the year, the Agency will work to support the recovery of the Ulster-Scots community and Ulster-Scots cultural activities, which will of necessity continue to require the same kind of flexibility and adaptability that we had to show in 2020. Most of our areas of activity will remain constant, with programmes being delivered so as to maximise positive impacts. We will place particular emphasis in seeking to reach out to the new groups that we engaged with through the delivery of an unprecedented level of Covid-19 Resilience Funding which was made possible by resources from DfC / Westminster to engage them with Ulster-Scots support organisations, establish their needs and extend their range of Ulster-Scots activities. We will make use of additional resources made available by Sponsor Departments in year by way of an agreed uplift in our annual budget to support the reanimation of grassroots community activity following the Pandemic, build on the success of Ulster-Scots Language Week and extend our reach among young people by creating a new fund to support Ulster-Scots activity in community-based youth provision.

Our programme of activity for the year is built around the Strategic Aims of our 2020-2022 Corporate Plan, *Inspire, Empower* and *Engage*.

SA1 – Inspire

The Agency will deliver a range of projects and programmes that will identify, interpret and animate Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture. By doing so we will seek to inspire those of all ages to learn more about their Ulster-Scots identity. We will build on previous successes to promote awareness of Ulster-Scots heritage throughout our annual cultural calendar, adapting our approach to the prevailing public health situation. We will deliver a year-long programme of activity in relation to the Centenary of Northern Ireland, which is a significant opportunity to raise awareness of Ulster-Scots heritage, people and its impact on all our lives: and we will also continue to develop our programme for Ulster-Scots Language Week.

The development of online/digital resources will continue to be a significant priority, building on the work undertaken in 2020 to promote new and existing Ulster-Scots content on a range of platforms to maximise accessibility to the community. We hope that as the year progresses, this will be complemented by an increasing amount of face to face activity and socially distanced events and we will remain flexible to facilitate this. We are also keen to facilitate the re-opening of the Discover Ulster-Scots Centre in Belfast, which has already achieved Covid Ready status.

All of our programming in schools has been significantly impacted by Covid-19, but we will continue to work with colleagues in the education system to be as supportive as we can in ensuring that where possible, young people do not lose out on the opportunity to learn about Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture. We will aim to ensure as much continuity as possible, while looking for new and innovative ways to bring Ulster-Scots into the classroom, which will

be particularly important as we move towards the implementation of the new statutory duty on the education system to promote Ulster-Scots, as provided for in the New Decade New Approach (NDNA) agreement.

SA2 – Empower

The Agency will deliver a range of projects and programmes that equip individuals and groups with knowledge and skills to engage with their Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture. We will seek to engage people through a range of entry level activities including workshops, courses and exhibitions, adapted to the prevailing public health situation. In particular, we will target groups that are new to us. We will seek to connect them with the Ulster-Scots Community Network and our three Community Impact Projects who will be supported to engage them and build their capacity. We are hopeful that a more normalised grant programme will be possible during 2021 and that we will be able to support Summer School and Festival Programmes, albeit with adaptations.

We will continue to support the delivery of accredited tuition across the range of Ulster-Scots cultural expressions and hope that the public health situation will allow for these to be in person as soon as possible. Scottish Country Dancing in particular continues to be significantly disrupted, but we will work with the sector towards a high profile resumption as soon as possible. Dance will be brought within our activities to celebrate the achievements of Ulster-Scots learners, which will grow to encompass at least 250 learners.

Using additional baseline resources, we will deliver a one-off programme of small grants to support Covid-19 compliant community events at the grassroots, which will help to Ulster-Scots community activities going again after the Pandemic. We will also establish a new small grants fund for youth organisations which will be delivered annually. We will also continue to expand the offering of Ulster-Scots Language Week by developing a series of new partnership projects with local authorities on both sides of the border.

During the year the UK Government is due to implement the formal recognition of the Ulster-Scots community under the Framework Convention for National Minorities. The Agency will deliver a programme of activity to mark this important milestone and use it to raise awareness of a sense of Ulster-Scots identity, as well as raising greater awareness of the cultural rights of Ulster-Scots, within the Ulster-Scots community itself and also within the public sector, where there is a growing level of awareness following on from NDNA.

SA3 – Engage

The Agency will deliver a range of projects and programmes through which we will reach out, locally and globally, to enhance friendship with people in Ulster whose primary identity is not Ulster-Scots: and foster kinship with people beyond Ulster who share our identity. We will seek opportunities to develop learning about Ulster-Scots by engaging with a broad audience at home and abroad. We will continue to promote Ulster-Scots within a context of cultural diversity by raising awareness of Ulster's three traditional strands of identity, English, Scotch and Irish; and reaching out to other ethnic minorities and Newcomer communities in order to promote reconciliation and mutual respect.

We anticipate that travel of any significant distance will continue to be problematic for much of 2021, but we will continue to make use of online solutions to build relationships with our partners nationally and internationally. Greater familiarity with these approaches has provided opportunities for key members of the Scots Language community in Scotland to be connected directly with an Ulster-Scots audience and this will be built upon through a range of projects. We also intend to build upon our successful trans-Atlantic experiences with e-learning for young people and adult learners.

Towards the end of 2020, the Agency engaged for the first time with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (Northern Ireland Branch) and during 2021 we will be working with this cross-party group of legislators to raise awareness of the importance of Ulster-Scots in placing Northern Ireland in a global setting and make connections with key individuals who can help us link to the wider Ulster-Scots diaspora.

SA1 – Inspire

The Agency will develop learning opportunities by identifying, interpreting and animating Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture.

	Activity	Measure	Target Date	Responsible Officer	Corp. Plan Target
1.1	Deliver a programme of learning activity in relation to Ulster-Scots Language Week.	Activity Programme	December 2021	G McMaster	CPSA1.13
1.2	Deliver programmes of activity in relation to key cultural dates, eg Burns Night, Independence Day, St Andrew's Day, Hogmanay	4 Activity Programmes	December 2021	Jacqueline Purse	CPSA1.14
1.3	Deliver a programme of activity in connection with the Centenary of Northern Ireland.	1 Activity Programme	December 2021	I Crozier	CPSA1.4
1.4	Develop a promotional programme for Ulster-Scots around national and international awareness days.	Stage a programme of at least 3 events	December 2021	Marketing Officer	CPSA1.14
1.5	Deliver 2 large scale capital heritage projects promoting aspects of Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture.	2 projects	December 2021	G McMaster	CPSA1.16
1.6	Deliver a programme of Ulster-Scots outreach events.	1 Outreach Programme	November 2021	D Reaney	CPSA3.2
1.7	Produce 6 learning assets (publications, digital content) relating to aspects of Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture.	6 assets	December 2021	R Hanna	CPSA1
	Activity	Measure	Target Date	Responsible Officer	Corp. Plan Target

1.8	Publish 6 Editions of the Ulster-Scot newspaper and 12 E-Bulletins.	6 Newspapers and 12 e-Bulletins to be delivered	December 2021	J Wallace	CPSA1
1.9	Deliver a programme of Blue Plaques around Ulster celebrating significant Ulster-Scots figures.	4 Blue Plaques	December 2021	J Purse	CPSA1
1.10	Deliver a promotional programme in relation to the 2021 Census.	1 Promotional Programme	March 2021	J Purse	CPSA1
1.11	Increase social media following by 50%.	Facebook following to increase to 14,250	Dec 2021	J Purse	CPSA1.1
1.12	Support primary schools via the Ulster-Scots Flagship School Programme.	Make 5 new Flagship Schools' awards	December 2021	G Blair	CPSA1.9
1.13	Deliver a North/South School Twinning Programme.	1 Programme delivered	December 2021	G Blair	CPSA2.14
1.14	Support 3 schools to become Ulster-Scots Schools of Excellence	Award status to 3 primary schools	December 2021	R Hanna	CPSA1.10
1.15	Deliver a programme of Ulster-Scots Afterschool Clubs in Primary Schools.	1 Programme delivered	December 2021	G Blair	CPSA2.12
1.16	Deliver a programme of educational workshops to schools	1 Programme delivered	December 2021	G Blair	CPSA2.13
1.17	Support a programme of Ulster-Scots music/dance tuition in schools	1 programme delivered	December 2021	J Wallace	CPSA2.16
1.18	Publish a series of articles showcasing and promoting the study of Ulster-Scots in schools.	10 articles published	December 2021	J Wallace	CPSA1
	Activity	Measure	Target Date	Responsible Officer	Corp. Plan Target
1.19	Deliver a pilot project in relation to marking Ulster-Scots Place Names.	1 Project delivered	December 2021	I Crozier / G McMaster	CPSA1

1.20	Support at least 5 Ulster-Scots language projects.	5 Projects supported	December 2021	D Reaney	CPSA1.7
1.21	Deliver a programme of partnerships supporting the preservation of Ulster-Scots heritage assets.	1 Programme delivered	December 2021	D McCallum / G McMaster	CPSA1.16

SA2 – Empower

The Agency will equip individuals and groups with knowledge and skills to engage with Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture.

	Activity	Measures	Target Date	Responsible Officer	Corp. Plan Target
2.1	Deliver 5 Ulster-Scots community funding programmes: Core; Music & Dance Tuition; Community Festivals; Community Impact; and Summer Schools.	5 programmes delivered.	December 2021	D Reaney / DO	CPSA2
2.2	Deliver a programme of training for 100 community groups.	100 groups engaged.	December 2021	D Reaney / DO	CPSA2
2.3	Deliver a programme of talks/webinars on Ulster-Scots language to schools and community groups.	Deliver 20 talks/webinars	December 2021	G Blair	CPSA2.6
2.4	Deliver a programme of exhibitions on Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture.	1 programme delivered.	December 2021	J Purse	CPSA1
2.5	Support the promotion of Ulster-Scots through a programme of community radio broadcasting.	2 broadcast periods.	December 2021	D Reaney	CPSA2.9
2.6	Deliver 2 heritage projects in ROI border counties.	2 projects delivered.	December 2021	D Reaney	CPSA1
2.7	Support 250 learners in achieving recognised qualifications in music and dance.	250 accredited learners	December 2021	G Blair J Wallace	CPSA2
2.8	Deliver a programme of events to mark the achievements of Ulster-Scots learners.	1 Programme	December 2021	G Blair J Wallace	CPSA2
2.9	Develop one new significant teaching and learning experience available to all schools in Northern Ireland.	1 resource hosted on nicurriculum.org.uk	December 2021	J Wallace	CPSA1
	Activity	Measures	Target Date	Responsible Officer	Corp. Plan Target

2.10	Develop and deliver 2 courses supported by the Ulster-Scots Learning Platform.	Develop and deliver 2 courses supported by the Ulster-Scots Learning Platform.	December 2021	R Hanna	CPSA1
2.11	Develop a Resolute Action programme for public sector organisations.	1 programme developed	December 2021	I Crozier/ G McMaster	CPSA1
2.12	Develop a programme of activity marking FCNM recognition.	1 programme developed	December 2021	I Crozier/ G McMaster	CPSA1
2.13	Develop an awareness raising project on Cultural Rights.	1 project developed	December 2021	I Crozier/ G McMaster	CPSA1

Additional Targets in respect of Baseline Budget Uplift

	Activity	Measures	Target Date	Responsible Officer	Corp. Plan Target
2.14	Develop a series of language partnership projects with local councils in support of Ulster-Scots Language Week.	5 projects developed	November 2021	G McMaster	CPSA1
2.15	Deliver a Small Grants Programme to support community events.	1 programme delivered	December 2021	D Reaney	CPSA1
2.16	Develop and launch a Youth Grants Programme.	1 programme developed	September 2021	J Wallace	CPSA1

SA3 – Engage

The Agency will reach out locally and globally, to enhance friendship with people in Ulster whose primary identity is not Ulster-Scots: and foster kinship with people beyond Ulster who share our identity.

	Activity	Measures	Target Date	Responsible Officer(s)	Corp. Plan Target
3.1	Deliver an Ulster-Scots programme in connection with Culture Night	1 Programme delivered	September 2021	Marketing Team	CPSA3.6
3.2	Deliver 2 projects reflecting the 3 strands of Ulster identity.	2 Projects delivered	December 2021	G McMaster	CPSA3.2
3.3	Deliver a programme of activity around the Border Reivers.	1 Programme delivered	December 2021	Development Team	CPSA3
3.4	Launch the new Discoverulsterscots website.	1 Launch event	July 2021	R Hanna/ Marketing Officer	CPSA1.1
3.5	Lead/participate in 4 collaborative projects with partners in the United States.	Lead/participate in 4 projects	December 2021	R Hanna	CPSA3.4
3.6	Deliver an East/West School Twinning Programme.	1 Programme	December 2021	G Blair	CPSA3.1
3.7	Develop East/West relationships with Scotland.	4 Sectoral engagements	December 2021	I Crozier/ G McMaster	CPSA3.3
3.8	Develop a programme of activity with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association to connect with the Ulster-Scots diaspora.	1 Programme	December 2021	I Crozier/ G McMaster	CPSA3

5. Monitoring and Reporting

Each activity and target within this Business Plan has an identified owner within the organisation. Targets will be incorporated into the annual work plans of individual members of staff or staff under their command. Each member of staff will complete a monthly progress report to their line manager detailing progress against agreed targets. Directors will submit a monthly progress report to the Chief Executive.

The Board of the Ulster-Scots Agency will receive regular reports on progress against Business Plan targets.

Sponsor Departments will receive regular progress reports against Business Plan targets within the context of the agreed SLA and regular Accountability Meetings; and regular reports will be submitted for the consideration of the North-South Ministerial Council through periodic Language Sectoral Meetings.

Annually the Agency will issue reporting on performance through the Annual Report and Accounts.