

Eugene Ó Cruadhlaoidh
Cléireach don Choiste
Joint Committee on Regional Development, Rural Affairs, Arts and the Gaeltacht
Houses of the Oireachtas
Kildare St
Dublin 2

21st September 2016

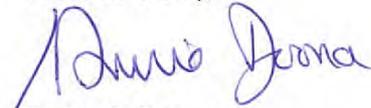
Dear Eugene Ó Cruadhlaoidh,

Thank you again for your letter of the 12th September 2016 with the invitation to address the Committee on my designated appointment as Chair of Bord Scannán na hÉireann/the Irish Film Board. I previously replied to you by email accepting the invitation and I am now writing to you to enclose my Opening Statement as requested by the Committee. I also enclose a copy of the IFB Strategic Plan 2016-2020: Building on Success and a copy of the IFB Production Catalogue 2016.

I am arranging to have delivered to you sufficient copies of the IFB Strategic Plan 2016-2020: Building on Success and the IFB Production Catalogue 2016 so that you have one for every Member of the Committee as well as yourself. I will be in the House of the Oireachtas as requested on the 28th September 2016 at 2:15pm and look forward to meeting the Committee then.

With best wishes;

Yours sincerely,



Dr Annie Doona
Chair Designate

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Oireachtas Joint Committee on Regional Development, Rural Affairs, Arts and the Gaeltacht
Bord Scannán na hÉireann / The Irish Film Board
Submission of Chairman Designate Dr. Annie Doona

1. Invitation

I am making this written submission to the Oireachtas Joint Committee in response to the invitation from the Chairperson for the Joint Committee Peadar Tóibín TD. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Joint Committee for its invitation to appear before them on the 28th September 2016 to address the Committee on my designated appointment as Chair of Bord Scannán na hÉireann/The Irish Film Board (IFB) and to outline the vision myself and the Board have for Irish film.

2. Acting Chair

I took up the role of Acting Chair in June 2015 following the sad passing of our previous and beloved Chair Bill O’Herlihy. I am President of IADT, the Institute of Art Design and Technology, the home of the National Film School. My background and experience in the creative and cultural sector gives me a clear understanding of the role of Irish storytelling and of the importance of the Irish film industry, not only to Ireland’s economic success but to our social and cultural life. I have extensive experience in Further and Higher Education leadership in Ireland, the UK and the USA. I believe this experience enables me to make a valuable contribution to the development of the IFB strategy and to good governance at the IFB I have extensive Board experience, on the National Digital Research Council, on Institutes of Technology Ireland, and on the Adult Education Board in Dun Laoghaire. I am a member of the Institute of Directors, the International Women’s Forum and Women in Film and Television Ireland. I have a strong commitment to developing audiences for Irish film in Ireland and internationally, and to Equality Diversity and Inclusiveness in the Irish film industry. I also have a strong commitment to developing the education and training aspects of the IFB to meet the growing needs of what is a truly exciting and vibrant industry. If I may I would like to expand on the role of the IFB and the aspirations of myself, the Board and the IFB Executive.

3. Mandate of IFB

IFB was established under the Irish Film Board Act (1980 – 2011) with a dual mandate of assisting and encouraging the making of film in Ireland and assisting and encouraging the development of an industry in Ireland for the making of films. We have recently published a Strategic Plan 2016 - 2020 ‘Building on Success’ which sets out the IFB’s Mission Vision and Values as well as the Key Challenges facing us and elaborating on our Strategic Objectives. A copy of the Strategic Plan for every member of the Committee is enclosed with this submission. Also attached is our Production Catalogue 2016. I am very excited about the strength of the film industry and our recent successes.

4. Building on Success

In 2015 and 2016, we witnessed the most extraordinary success of Irish film, television and animation. IFB-supported films received eight Academy Award® nominations (with a total of ten nominations for Irish films and filmmakers), which is an extraordinary achievement. Two IFB funded films *Room* and *Brooklyn* were nominated in the Best Picture category. The IFB-supported film *The Lobster* won the Jury Prize at the Cannes Film Festival, and *Room*, won the prestigious People's Choice Award at the Toronto International Film Festival. In 2015/16 Irish films have taken over \$147 million at the worldwide box office and has generated

global sales. The IFB also funds hugely successful feature documentaries including *Older than Ireland* and *Queen of Ireland* and Irish produced, internationally distributed TV animation series such as *Kiva Can Do*, *Puffin Rock* and *Little Roy*.

This achievement is the result of investment and support provided by the IFB over many years and proves that in order to achieve national and international recognition it is vital to invest (and continue to invest) in home-grown talent.

5. Carpe Diem - Seize the Day

Irish film and screen content has achieved phenomenal worldwide success, but what comes next? Ireland has a new, improved and extremely competitive tax incentive for production activity in place, but how do we maximise the benefits of this? We believe that now is the time to seize the opportunity that this success presents to Ireland, to scale the industry to the next level; I also believe that the IFB is the agency to direct and oversee this growth.

6. Key Challenges

The Strategic Plan 2016 – 2020 ‘Building on Success’ sets out the Key Challenges facing the screen content production sector over the next five years as follows:

- (a) Positioning the sector as a strategically important contributor to the cultural and economic life of the country.
- (b) Identifying, nurturing and developing creative talent and building a film culture in Ireland.
- (c) Embracing diversity and gender equality in all its forms and ensuring the participation and representation of the full range of diverse voices in Ireland.
- (d) Strengthening the links between creative vision, quality of work and audience engagement to achieve critical and commercial success for Irish screen content.
- (e) Restoring IFB funding levels to enable us to fulfil our remit and the strong ambition of Irish filmmakers.
- (f) Improving the local landscape by way of partnerships with state agencies, broadcasters and content distributors.
- (g) Strengthening the position of Irish film, television and animation in the rapidly shifting international marketplace.
- (h) Ensuring we have the right skills and training facilities to allow us to enable continuous industry growth.
- (i) Ensuring we have the infrastructure to support production.
- (j) Ensuring Ireland is competitive in terms of the international landscape for screen production.

7. Strategic Objectives

As part of the Strategy, we have identified core Strategic Objectives which, when taken as a whole, will strengthen the IFB and help us build on the industry's success:

7.1 Vision for 2020

- (a)** Vision and Leadership
- (b)** Gender Equality and Diversity
- (c)** Building Audiences

7.2 Building on our Core Strengths

- (a)** Development and Support of Creative Screen Content Production
- (b)** Development of Talent and Skills
- (c)** Inward Production and Investment

7.3 Strong Foundations

- (a)** Increased Investment in the IFB
- (b)** Partnerships for Screen Production
- (c)** Organisational Effectiveness

We have set out an implementation plan to execute the various actions developed in the strategy. A central part of our strategy is also the regional development of film, TV and animation production across Ireland and in the island of Ireland.

8. IFB Funded Productions Across Ireland

The IFB provides production and completion funding for feature films, feature documentaries and TV animation across Ireland. Recent productions include *Maze* and *The Young Offenders* in Cork City and county, *A Date for Mad Mary* in Drogheda, *Halal Daddy* in Sligo, *Athrí (Penance)* in Donegal, the animation feature *The Breadwinner* in Kilkenny, *Pilgrimage* in Galway/Mayo, *Sanctuary* and *Song of Granite* in Galway and *The Lodgers* in Wexford.

9. Inward Production Across Ireland

The IFB works with local authorities to promote inward productions across Ireland with active film commissions in Wicklow, Cork, Kerry, Limerick, Galway, Mayo, Offaly, Waterford, and Sligo. Recent productions include *Star Wars* in Kerry, Cork and Donegal and *Red Water* in Waterford, and the IFB is actively working with the promoters of Troy Studio in Limerick with a view to production locating there. Galway is a major hub for film and TV production with IFB and TG4 based there. The Dublin Wicklow region is the main centre of production with Ardmore Studios in Bray and Ashford Studios at Ashford hosting TV series such as *Penny Dreadful* and *Vikings*. Film, TV drama and TV animation production are intensely mobile and it is anticipated that production expenditure in those sectors alone will be over €200M in 2016 generating jobs across Ireland.

10. Northern Ireland

The IFB works with Northern Ireland Screen in connection with the funding of projects including the *Truth Commissioner* and *Athrí (Penance)*. Northern Ireland Screen also provides production funding to inward productions into Northern Ireland in addition to the UK film tax credit (which is available in Northern Ireland) and promotes the film studios in Belfast. Northern Ireland Screen has guaranteed funding from the UK government of £43M over a period of four years 2015 – 2018 (approx. £11m per annum) and actively promotes Northern Ireland as a film, TV drama, TV animation and computer games location.

11. Vision for 2020

Within our Vision for 2020 there is a Vision and Leadership for the Screen Sector which includes positioning the IFB at the centre of industry and artistic leadership for film and screen content production in Ireland. This is at the heart of the IFB's vision of the next five years. In particular we want to provide artistic leadership nurturing and developing creative talent on screen. The Vision for 2020 also includes the promotion of gender equality and diversity in screen production and content and Building Audiences for the work supported by the IFB.

12. Building Our Core Strengths

We see that our role over the next five years is strengthen and deepen our support and development of creative talent working in film and screen content production in Ireland. This includes providing development funding and production funding across a range of screen content but particularly cinema feature films as well as feature documentaries, TV animation and TV drama. I have had many discussions with the Executive of the IFB about the talent we need to deliver on this. We have created a new position of Head of Creative Production and Talent Development and ensuring that the creative team working in the IFB is fully and properly resourced in to deliver on our commitments in the Strategic Plan.

Building on our Core Strengths also involves the Development and Nurturing of Talent and Skills through training and education. This work is undertaken through Screen Training Ireland which is part of the IFB and with increased funding and resources, it can deliver on the increase in creativity and job creation which the industry needs to be able to grow and develop over the next five years. As Lenny Abrahamson said recently:

"Ireland's presence globally is through its culture, that's our strongest identifier. With really clever targeted support, I think we could have a world class content creation sector in Ireland."

Lenny Abrahamson Academy Award Nominated Director. LA Times Article 'Irish Film Board has growing Ambition for its Industry after 2016 Oscars'

13. Strong Foundations

This growth and development needs Strong Foundations: the first of these strong foundations needs to be Increased Investment in the IFB. IFB funded films have received worldwide recognition for their creativity and innovation and strong inward production has delivered jobs and exports to the Irish economy. I have gone on record as Chair in calling for the restoration of IFB funding to €20million of capital funding.

Other Strong Foundations includes our Partnerships for Screen Production including working with all the other stakeholders in the screen content production sector. These partners in the public sector include the Department of Regional Development, Rural Affairs, Arts and the Gaeltacht itself as well as the other

government Departments involved in the sector, the public service broadcasters RTÉ and TG4 and the BAI, IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland as well as international public funders in the EU and elsewhere.

Finally Strong Foundations can only be built with Organisational Effectiveness. The IFB Strategic Plan 2016 to 2020 refers to the need for the organisation to be appropriately resourced, structured, governed and managed so as to most effectively support our mission and to achieve our strategic aims. We submitted a Workforce Plan 2016 to the Department in June 2016 and want to proceed to implement this fully in 2017.

14. The Programme for Government

The Programme for Government 2016 specifically provided as follows:

- (a) Work to progressively increase funding to the arts, including the Arts Council and the Irish Film Board, as the economy continues to improve.
- (b) Work with the Irish Film Board to ensure that Ireland is maximised as a location for international film production.

As Chair Designate I welcome these commitments and look forward to using my experience and indeed my love for film to strengthen the role of the IFB as a leader in a vibrant and globally important film industry.

Thank you to the Committee for its invitation to present this Submission and to appear before you today.