



**AGM Tuesday 18 March 2008  
at HI~Arts, Inverness at 13.00**

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

Present: Ian Brown (HITN Chair), Euan Martin (Right Lines Productions/Board Member), Jackie Goode (Goode for a Giggle/Board Member), John Durnin (Pitlochry Festival Theatre), Nick Fearne (Dogdaze Theatre Company/Moray Council), Chris King (Zenwing Puppets), John Cairns (Grey Coast Theatre Company), Hamish MacDonald and Matthew Zajac (Dogstar Theatre Company), Chris Lee and Ali Ross (Wildbird), Robert Livingston (HI~Arts), Muriel Ann MacLeod (HITN Development Officer / Theatre Hebrides), Stuart Brownlee (HITN Marketing & Information Co-ordinator).

1. **Apologies:** Dave Smith (Right Lines Productions/Arts in Motion), Henri Edwards (Red Shoes Theatre), Sandy Anderson (HITN Board Member), Dolina MacLennan (HITN Board Member), Simon MacKenzie, Karrie Marshall (Zenwing Puppets), George Gunn (Grey Coast Theatre Company), Sadie Dixon-Spain (The Walking Theatre Company), Jenny Hardie (An t-Sireadh Eu-comasach), Frank McConnell and Siobhan Cain (Plan B), Alasdair Satchel (Perhilion Theatre Company).
2. **Minutes of AGM held on Thursday 22 March 2007 and matters arising.**  
Approved. No matters arising.
3. **Company update and review of business since the AGM held on 22 March 2007. Chairman's and Co-ordinators' reports on activities.**

(IB) – 4 major activities continued as per HITN business plan: Northern Connections, DNA2007, Marketing, and Training. Network currently has 26 members. Profile of theatre activity continues to be raised across the range, particularly in the Moray area. Second members 'away weekend' was held at Pitlochry in June 2006. Next AGM due June 2008.

(IB) – existence of HITN continues to be extremely helpful in what is a difficult time for arts funding in Scotland. SAC has committed to fund the network for 2008/09 to a maximum of £10k (application in process), matched by HIE through HI~Arts to a maximum of £12.5k.

(IB) – a significant adverse event has taken place with the SAC announcement that it will no longer commit funds to the Highland Producers' Fund. The general feeling is that the announcement of this was badly handled by SAC. (MZ) – tabled a statement for consideration by the members. With a couple of amendments, this was adopted by the AGM as the corporate view of HITN. The statement reads:

### **Statement in support of the retention of the Highland Producers' Fund**

“25 years ago, with the notable exception of the then Mull Little Theatre, there was no professional theatre produced in the Highlands. There had been the occasional short-lived venture during the 60s and 70s, but aside from the thriving amateur dramatic scene, the Highlands had no theatre tradition whatsoever. In the intervening years, that has changed. Eden Court put out a few tours during the late 80s and the Clown Jewels, later Arts In Motion, began its work then too. Grey Coast sprung up in 1992 and since then, a number of other companies have appeared. Now we can see the prospect of a degree course in Theatre Studies being established at the UHI. We have the beginnings of a theatre culture in the region.

The existence of the Highland Producers' Fund has been instrumental in developing what is here now. But what is here now is fragile. It needs continuing sustenance at a regional level. It would appear that the fund was created as an acknowledgement that the relative geographical distance of the region from the centre of power in Scotland made it difficult for SAC officers and others to gain a full enough picture of what was happening on the ground. The internet does now make it a lot easier to keep in touch from a distance, but it will never be a sufficient substitute for face-to-face experience. That's why it's important to retain the regional access which the HPF represents.

A few Highlands & Islands theatre companies have received some funding directly from Edinburgh in recent years and that is to be welcomed as a significant development. It should be noted that companies such as Dogstar and Right Lines would not have been in a position to gain recognition from the SAC without the money from the HPF they received for earlier productions. The £90,000 total of the HPF last year is really quite a small amount. The SAC contributed over half, £50,000. One should not underestimate the positive effect of the relatively small grants the HPF has been able to disburse. Several new companies have been established during the last decade as more theatre professionals choose to settle or remain in the Highlands & Islands. The HPF is vital for their continuing development and for fostering new initiatives. Our fear is that these existing developing companies in the Highlands will wither and aspiring new theatre initiatives may remain in the imaginations of their progenitors for want of an accessible resource like the HPF.”

(IB) – it is proposed to operate a twin-track approach to this situation: the Chairman and one or two Board members will seek a meeting with the SAC at the highest level as soon as possible to make the case for the retention of the fund; and alternative funding sources will be investigated as a matter of urgency. (IB) – suggested that any individual member companies could also provide letters of support for the fund to be retained and that these could be circulated along with the adopted HITN statement. Thanks to (MZ) for providing the lead on this.

(IB) – thanked (RL) for working to put in place an interim solution for this coming financial year, with potentially a £40-50k funding package being put together (to be confirmed).

(HMacD) – proposed that the Promoters Arts Network (PAN) and North East Arts Touring (NEAT) be approached to provide a supporting statement on the importance of indigenous theatre to the region. This was approved.

(JD) – indicated that the Federation of Scottish Theatre (FST) will be a supporting statement regarding the retention of the fund.

**ACTION: (IB) – to arrange with Board members to seek an early meeting with the SAC at the highest level to present the case for the continuation of the HPF.**

**(SB) – to circulate HITN corporate statement to membership and to ask PAN and NEAT to consider making supporting statements to SAC.**

#### FIG and dna2007

(IB) – provided members with an overview with regards to the work of the FIG group, the development and evaluation of DNA2007. The final evaluation report is to be completed by the end of March and circulated to members and funders following completion of final negotiations with the Vine PR company regarding their contribution to the event.

There was discussion around the role of the FIG and in particular of HITN member representatives in the decision-making process for dna2007. General support was given to an event ‘curator’ idea working to the FIG for any future ‘dna type’ event and (MZ) asked that the existing ‘artistic policy’ statement should be circulated for feedback with a view to updating it. (RL) – expressed the view that the proposed new delivery model should resolve any real or perceived communication shortcomings.

**ACTION: (SB) – to circulate final dna2007 evaluation report to membership and funders.**

**(SB) – to circulate ‘artistic policy’ statement for dna2007 for feedback and updating.**

#### Board membership

(IB) – intimated that Ann McKay stood down as a Board member due to a change in her role at Inverness College. (DMcL and SA) – would remain as independent directors and that while representatives of the business community had been approached there had been no response. Board membership capacity was confirmed as being 2 member company corporate directors and a maximum of 6 independent directors. It was also possible for a member company representative to stand as an independent director, as an individual in their own right.

(IB) – indicated that he had acted as Chair for 3 years now and that it was his intention to stand down from office at the next AGM in June 2009. This final year of chairmanship would be spent working to identify and secure a different funding

package for sustaining the network and also in helping to develop the successor event to dna2007. (IB) - an agreement had been previously made with members to bring the AGM into line with the accounting period and move it to June each year – this was ratified by the AGM.

#### Co-ordinators Reports

(SB) – reported that most of his time over the last year had been spent on dna2007 activity – fundraising, development, delivery, ‘draw-down’ claims, managing cashflow and evaluation.

(MAMaL) – a full development and training update would be provided as part of the Members meeting to follow – in summary, HITN now actively working with FST and ITC to bring collaborative industry training sessions to the region, and working with developing partnerships to continue with the Northern Connections project approach and possibly also as a third party collaborator in a Swedish led Northern Periphery project.

#### **4. Financial update.**

A copy of the Unaudited Financial Statements as at 31 March 2007 was tabled for members consideration. (IB) - these show a small deficit carried forward to 2007/08 of £2,115. After discussion it was agreed to instruct the company’s accountants (Ritsons) to include a sentence in the Directors Report showing how HITN proposes to deal with the deficit (by trimming costs and raising more funding). (MZ) – queried the ‘Consultants Fees’ entry on page 8 of the accounts. (IB) – confirmed that these referred to the freelance fees for (MAMaL and SB). Operating management accounts for 2007/08 have still to be finalised, but are likely to show a deficit of some £3-4k. Funding of £22.5k (minimum) for 2008/09 is anticipated and this will keep the company viable until at least the third quarter of the coming financial year company, by which time additional funding will need to have been sourced. (IB) – declared that the company is not currently unduly exposed and that the Board commends the 06/07 accounts to the members. This was accepted by the AGM.

**ACTION: (MAMaL) – to instruct Ritsons to add a sentence to the 06/07 Directors Report to indicate how HITN proposes to deal with the reported deficit (by trimming costs and raising more funding).**

#### **5. Election of Corporate Member Directors (2); and**

#### **6. Election of Independent Member Directors**

(IB) – proposed that agenda items 5 and 6 be taken together – approved.

No nominations had been received for either Corporate Member Directors or Independent Member Directors.

(IB) – reported that there was now a very strong concentration of HITN members in the Moray area (9 of the existing 26 members – 35%). (RL) – confirmed that there had been 14 professional organisations represented at a recent meeting of interested Moray companies, of whom 9 were currently HITN members. There was a clearly expressed desire not to replicate a similar body to HITN within

Moray but rather to define an appropriate working relationship between the Moray companies and HITN.

(IB) – as a result of this, the Board proposes to the AGM that this membership makeup be reflected in the Board structure. To this end, it is proposed that (EM) be appointed as an Independent Board Member with immediate effect, leaving a Corporate Member vacancy, to be circulated amongst the Moray HITN members in the first instance to seek nomination(s). This course of action was approved by the AGM (proposed by (MZ), seconded by (AR)).

Independent Member Directors for 2008/09 are therefore: Ian Brown, Dolina MacLennan, Sandy Anderson and Euan Martin (with 2 vacancies).

Corporate Member Directors for 2008/09 are therefore: Jackie Goode (with 1 vacancy – see above).

**ACTION: (SB) – to circulate an invitation to Moray based HITN members to nominate a representative to act as a Corporate Member Director for one year.**

#### **7. Membership Fees 2007/08.**

Fee currently set at £50. The Board does not recommend an increase. This was approved by the AGM. However, (JD) proposed on behalf of Pitlochry Festival Theatre that PFT and other member organisations with a similar scale of turnover, e.g. the Traverse and Eden Court, pay an annual membership fee of £500 in recognition of their different operating scales. This generous proposal was welcomed by the meeting and unanimously endorsed. Membership renewal is due 12 months from date of issue of last invoice. HI~Arts, as book-keepers, will manage this.

(MZ) – queried the prospect for HITN funding beyond 2008/09. (IB) – other funding streams will need to be identified during the course of this coming financial year as a matter of priority.

**ACTION: (SB) – to liaise with (KR) regarding the issuing of membership renewals.  
(IB, MAMaL & SB) – to investigate alternative sources of funding.**

#### **8. Any other competent business.**

(IB) – paid tribute to (DMaL, SA, EM, JG, AMcK, MAMcL and SB) for their efforts on behalf of HITN during 2007/08 and to (RL) for the continued support of HI~arts. (JG) – thanked (IB) for all his work on behalf of the HITN membership and for his personal support and encouragement throughout the year. (MZ) – asked that a ‘get well’ card be sent from the membership to (DMcL) There being no further business, the Chairman brought the HITN AGM 2008 to a close at 13.50.

**ACTION: A ‘get well’ card to be sourced and sent to (DMcL) – actioned immediately.**

**ACTIONS:**

- 3. ACTION:** (IB) – to arrange with Board members to seek an early meeting with the SAC at the highest level to present the case for the continuation of the HPF.
- (SB) – to circulate HITN corporate statement to membership and to ask PAN and NEAT to consider making supporting statements to SAC.
- (SB) – to circulate final dna2007 evaluation report to membership and funders.
- (SB) – to circulate ‘artistic policy’ statement for dna2007 for feedback and updating.
- 4. ACTION:** (MAMaL) – to instruct Ritsons to add a sentence to the 06/07 Directors Report to indicate how HITN proposes to deal with the reported deficit (by trimming costs and raising more funding).
- 5 & 6. ACTION:** (SB) – to circulate an invitation to Moray based HITN members to nominate a representative to act as a Corporate Member Director for one year.
- 7. ACTION:** (SB) – to liaise with (KR) regarding the issuing of membership renewals.  
(IB, MAMaL & SB) – to investigate alternative sources of funding sources.
- 8. ACTION:** A ‘get well’ card to be sourced and sent to (DMcL) – actioned immediately.

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