



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GAIROLOCH & DISTRICT HERITAGE COMPANY LTD

23 October 2024
Gairloch Museum. 4.30pm.

Present Allan Templeton; Corinna Annetts; Pauline Butler; Peter Lynn; Irene Macintyre; Roy Macintyre; Barbara Mackenzie; Anne MacLennan; Gordon McIntosh; Ben Thomas (Zoom).
Apologies Anna MacQuarrie; Jean Ross; Guy Seaman; Eilidh Smith; Scott Steedman.

1. Conflicts of Interest

No potential conflict of interest was declared with respect to the Agenda. A new Register of Directors' Interests will be compiled for the first meeting post-AGM.

2. Minutes of the Board meeting of 11 September

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 September were agreed to be a correct record, proposed by Anne and seconded by Irene.

Matter arising: Roy has not received any response following initial correspondence with respect to negotiation of a new lease with our College tenants. He will follow this up, and in the meantime, ascertain with Corinna what information is currently held on the Museum computer network and what needs to be added.

3. Report of the Executive Group

The Executive Group met on 1 October. Notes from the meeting have been circulated to inform of progress on action points.

Matter arising: the Financial Strategy continues to be developed. Deborah Keith has agreed to chair the group progressing this.

4. Financial report

Pete's report on our income and expenditure breakdown to the end of September has been circulated. The direct trading (income v. expenditure) outcomes are better than last year, owing to the decision not to replace departing staff members. We recognise though that this has stretched the resources of our employees. The commission on sales from the *Fragile Land* exhibition has been a welcome bonus this year. Forward payment of grants considerably helps our cash flow and bank balance.

We have received two generous donations recently which will cover the 2024-2025 shortfall in the *Whatever the Weather* budget and also allow us to pay staff to enable lunch to be provided on winter Wednesdays.

Pete will set up an interest-bearing business account with Bank of Scotland, at a slightly lower rate of interest, as Virgin Money have failed to complete the procedures required.

5. Review of Articles of Association

As OSCR noted on submission of our annual Accounts last month, the Board has not formally reviewed the Articles of Association for the past 3 years. They were fully revised in 2013 as the organisation became a Company limited by Guarantee, with further amendment in December 2017, bringing an employee onto the Board. They were submitted as part of our 2024 Accreditation return and are also needed for most funding applications, so they are checked externally very frequently. Pauline explained the procedures required for any amendment. After discussion, the Board agreed that, although rather archaic in terminology, our Articles are fit for our current purposes and procedures.

6. Curator's report

Corinna's report has been circulated. It covered: New Acquisitions; Grants; Asbestos Management Plan; Exhibitions; Environmental Monitoring; Events; Smartify and Projects. Further to this:

- i) Alison Dunlop's exhibition will now continue until our December closedown given the delayed arrival and the unexpected additional costs of the originally planned *Tapestry of the Highlands*.
- ii) Details have been received of the costs of continuing to subscribe to Smartify, once the current funding subsidy comes to an end. It was agreed that we would wish to be involved if MHH are able to secure a further grant but that, otherwise, given the fees and the staff resources required to benefit from the opportunities available, we would withdraw from that platform. There is still content to be finalised and we have created some useful resources as a result of our experiences.
- iii) A response has now been received from the HSE with respect to the management of collection objects which contain asbestos. The decision whether to take professional advice is left with the duty holder, not a legal requirement. Corinna has therefore packed away the gas masks securely, labelled them as not to be touched and will ensure that anyone who visits/works in the artefacts store is appropriately informed.
- iv) The data storage review will be a priority for the winter months.
- v) Four of the applicants for the Events & Outreach Coordinator post have been invited for interview on Friday 25 October.

7. Gaelic Development

Anna's report on her recent involvement has been circulated. We are pleased that her contract has been extended by three months.

There will be further encouragement for students at the High School to come to the Friday afternoon conversation sessions.

8. Events and Outreach

The report from the group meeting of 17 September has been circulated. Three sites were suggested for visits that could inform the proposed development of a roundhouse project.

There are currently 7 talks organised for the winter months to offer a very attractive programme.

9. Exhibitions

The report from the EPG meeting of 10 September has been circulated. Discussions are ongoing to liaise with RSA with respect to the celebrations of their bicentenary anniversary in 2026 and our 50th anniversary in 2027.

10. Membership

Pauline included local members who have not re-joined over the past 12 months in the send-out of invitations to the AGM, with some positive responses.

11. Environmental Sustainability

The 'Ever Greener' task force has made good progress with weeding and clearing of invasives and is now focussed on improving the biodiversity and heritage interest of our site. An offer to install bird boxes at the back of the Museum area was gratefully accepted. The proposals being considered at the moment include ensuring there is planting of all 18 trees of the Gaelic Tree Alphabet, designing a related leaflet for family walks, and integrating ideas for a heritage planting outdoor display in the roundhouse build project.

12. Operational matters

- i) Front of House: Eildih's notes have been circulated. Footfall, after a comparable September, has been lower than recent years so far this month, both at the Museum and more widely in the area. It was agreed to end the contract of the Tap-to-Donate equipment, given that the costs (rental and bank charges) outweigh the income. A second box for cash donations will take its place.

It was suggested that we might build up a collection of local ghost stories for the archives!

- ii) Café: Sally's formal resignation has been received. She has built up a strong reputation for Am Bàrd and the current model of operation has been a great success. We very much appreciate that that she will keep the Wednesday lunches going through the winter. The Café group meets next week to begin consideration of the recruitment of a successor.
- iii) Facilities and Health and Safety:
 - Relevant risk assessments should all be reviewed as soon as a meeting can be arranged so that they can be amended as necessary in the light of the season's experiences. 'Events' assessments have been revised each time there's been a different activity so there is a good range of templates now available for these.
 - FoH staff have set up a record sheet to report maintenance and building snag issues. Whilst some of these have been resolved, a number are ongoing as the repairs/actions taken have not worked, including fire doors that are sticking and leaking water flows in the toilets. Feedback follow-ups and outcomes need to be recorded.
A list of contractors was prepared at the start of this year and are listed in the Emergency Plan, but this needs to be double-checked to ensure that the professionals noted are still available. In liaison with Guy, Roy and Allan will speak to various individuals who we may be able to bring in on a more regular basis to deal with maintenance issues as they arise, be it on a paid or voluntary basis.

12. Any Other Business

- i) The Gaelic sign has still to be fixed in place. Roy hopes that this will be completed after this half term holiday.
- ii) All present were asked to canvas proxy votes from members who are unable to attend the AGM, in order to ensure we are quorate. Irene will inform Jean of catering offers for the evening.
- iii) Tom Gardner has recently visited and is planning a community archaeology dig next April. There is also the possibility of a talk for Highland Archaeology Week later in the year.
- iv) Radio Wester Ross would appreciate a letter of support for a funding application. Details are awaited.
- v) Corinna requested that any offers of object donations should be directed to her in person and not handed in when she is unavailable.

13. Summary of Action Points

- **Roy** to check with Corinna as to the correspondence filed with respect to lease negotiations with WHC
- **Financial Strategy Group** to finalise and circulate their proposal document
- **Pete** to set up an interest-paying account with the Bank of Scotland
- The **Ever Greener** group to source plants to complete our coverage of those on the Gaelic Tree Alphabet
- **Eilidh** to cancel the Tap-to-Donate contract when it comes up for renewal
- **Roy** to follow through the fixing of the third sign with the contractor
- **Guy, Eilidh and Barbara** to meet to review risk assessments, given this season's experiences
- **Roy and Allan** to speak to local contractors with a view to a regular commitment to Museum maintenance.

14. Dates of next meetings

The next full Board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 4 December at 4.30pm; the Executive Group will meet on 5 November.

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 5.55pm.