



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

4 December 2024
Gairloch Museum. 4.30pm.

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

Apologies Liz Forrest; Jean Ross; Scott Steedman.

1. Conflicts of Interest

No potential conflict of interest was declared with respect to the Agenda. Most Board members have now returned the new Register of Directors' Interests form as requested.

2. Election of Officers

As this is the first meeting since the AGM, our Articles require the appointment of the Board Chair, Vice-chair(s), Treasurer and Secretary. There being no other nominations, the retiring Board officers were all endorsed to continue in their roles:

Chair: Allan Templeton; Vice-chairs: Roy Macintyre and Jean Ross; Treasurer: Peter Lynn; Secretary: Pauline Butler.

3. Minutes of the Board meeting of 23 October

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 October were agreed to be a correct record, proposed by Anne and seconded by Ben.

Matter arising: A new lease has been prepared for our UHI tenants, with rental increase backdated to August 2024. This is now with the College's solicitors.

4. Report of the Executive Group

The Executive Group met on 5 November. Notes from the meeting have been circulated to inform of progress on action points. The necessity always to have a contingency in place should the designated speaker at our AGM be unavailable at the last moment has been noted! Our gratitude, on this occasion, goes to Allan for his excellent presentation of *From Gairloch to the Galapagos*.

5. Financial report

Pete's report on our income and expenditure breakdown to the end of November has been circulated. Although trading has been quiet through the autumn and into winter, and the year will end with a loss (less than in 2023), across the operational aspects, there have been several welcome donations to support permanent exhibition development and *Whatever the Weather Wednesdays* as well as further grant income to improve the bank balance. Two new interest-bearing accounts have now been set up: one to establish the basis of an endowment fund to support events, outreach and training, and the second a development fund, to enhance permanent exhibitions.

Initial calculations on the impact of the rise in employer National Insurance contributions from April 2025 indicate that there will be minimal direct effect on the wages budget.

6. Review of Company Risk Register

Pauline and Ben have reviewed the aspects included in the first edition of our Company Risk Register and circulated a paper which notes developments and issues arising over the past 6 months. Pauline drew attention to :

- the relatively limited training undertaken by Board members. Allan cited an AIM document on trustee responsibilities which he had found useful
- the pressures on our employees, particularly currently our Curator, who is spending most of her time dealing with the applications for, and delivery of, grant-funding, to the detriment of curatorial tasks and activities
- the lack of a long term facilities management plan.

Ben added concerns over financial vulnerabilities resulting from the (quite likely) end to grant support from Highlife Highland; the potential effect on costs and visitor footfall and spend from geo-political events way outside our control; our dependency on successful grant applications for much of our extension/outreach work; and risks to our reputation and bank balance should the new café operation not be successful. We recognise the Financial Sustainability Group will be working to address these issues.

Both Anna and Ben offered their support and advice with respect to making grant applications.

7. Financial Strategy Group (FSG)

Allan provided a resumé of the experience of Deborah Keith, who has been asked by the FSG to chair the group. The meeting endorsed the Terms of Reference proposed, with minor amendments. There was discussion about various aspects of the draft Financial Strategy, which covers a broad range of aims and intentions to improve the Museum's financial sustainability over the medium term. In particular, it was suggested that there should be explicit recognition of the need to consider expenditure and costs as well as generate income. Allan will take these general points, and other specific details raised by some Board members, to the next FSG meeting. The priority of funding the appointment of a marketing professional was approved, as was the establishment of the two funds, (outlined in the Financial Report). Pauline indicated targets for the first year of the Strategy would need to be developed for the forthcoming Forward Plan.

8. Curator's report

Corinna's report has been circulated. It covered: New Acquisitions; Grants; Environmental Monitoring; Events; Projects; Collections Research and Enquiries. Further to this:

- i) Roy offered his assistance in responding to the enquiries about the botulism case and the Kay Matheson Stone of Destiny fragment.
- ii) John Mackenzie has agreed to renew the loan of the Poolewe Hoard to Gairloch Museum for a further period of 10 years.
- iii) Corinna is investigating whether the new Museum Data Service would be more useful to us in the sharing of object records than Axiell Collections. It is certainly more affordable.
- iv) The Board fully endorsed Corinna's proposed approach to resolve a request from a local family to retrieve some artefacts in our Collection. She will report back in due course.
- v) The Board agreed that it will stand as guarantor for match funding of the grant from the Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund for the costs of the *Whatever the Weather* programme for 2024-2026.

9. Gaelic Development

Anna's report on her plans for the three month extension of her contract has been circulated. All museums participating in the project are meeting next week, and she will be visiting Gairloch in January for the final time as part of this current role.

10. Events and Outreach

The report from the group meeting of 5 November has been circulated and there had been a further meeting this morning, which our new Events & Outreach Coordinator, Ell Sinclair, had been able to attend as part of her first visit. She starts with us in early January. The main focus of today's meeting had been the Roundhouse project.

11. Exhibitions

The report from the EPG meeting of 21 November has been circulated.

12. Environmental Sustainability

The 'Ever Greener' task force has had an offer of trees from NatureScot's Beinn Eighe nursery to fill some of the gaps in the Gaelic Tree Alphabet. The NTS at Inverewe will be approached to see if they also can help. Owing to bad weather, the planned November meeting was rescheduled for 10 December.

13. Operational matters

- i) Front of House: Eilidh requires information about each Board member in order to meet the legal obligations of our card payment company. Pauline can provide this from the Declaration of Interests returns.
- ii) Café: Interviews for a new Café manager are scheduled for 19 December.
- iii) Retail: Irene hopes that there can be a publicity boost to promote the sale of our remaining 2025 calendars.
- iv) Facilities and Health and Safety:
 - the lights should all now be working!
 - the floors upstairs will be sealed over the winter
 - Roy has asked the architect to return to view the deterioration of the external render and to propose remediation work. This and other longer-term maintenance and equipment replacement need to be included in a schedule of future premises work. This should include the external car-parking areas.
 - Guy, Eilidh and Barbara are planning to meet in the New Year to review relevant risk assessments with a view to amending them as necessary in the light of the season's experiences. These sessions should be the basis of establishing a Facilities Management Group.
 - following up comments from the Volunteer Feedback meeting in November, it was recommended that work undertaken in response to maintenance issues raised should be recorded in the file available to all as word of mouth is not always a reliable communication.

14. Interim Review of 2024-2025 Action Plan

Pauline, Eilidh and Corinna had contributed to the overview, circulated, of what had been done so far to implement the wide-ranging aspects of our '24-25 Action Plan, using our usual red/amber/green colour coding. Everyone was asked to check the accuracy of the review and to endeavour to finalise or progress those aspects for which they are responsible, so that, come the end of March, more can be colour-coded as green.

This is the final year of the current Forward Plan cycle. Corinna, Ben and Pauline are meeting on 6 December to begin to draw together the Museum's ambitions and plans for the next edition.

15. Any Other Business

- i) We have a vacancy now for a co-opted member. Thought should be given as to who, maybe a younger person, might be invited to fill that role, to mutual benefit.
- ii) Gordon has ascertained that there is no space on the roof for any further energy-efficient structures. Pete has checked out whether batteries might be used to store any surplus from the solar panels and deemed them not to be cost-effective. We will remain alert to any opportunities, (a district heating scheme might be proposed, for example), which would be of interest.

16. Summary of Action Points

- **Pauline** to finalise the first review of the Company Risk Register, given comments received
- **Financial Strategy Group** to revise their proposal document in the light of Board discussions and individual feedback
- **Corinna** to investigate further whether the Museum Data Service or Axiell Collections would better serve our curatorial needs and report back
- The **Ever Greener** group to contact NTS to see if they have plants available to complete our coverage of those on the Gaelic Tree Alphabet
- **Pauline** to provide Eilidh with the information needed for the card payment company to meet its legal responsibilities

- **Jean, Allan and Irene** to form the interview panel for a café manager
- **Guy, Eilidh and Barbara** to meet, as the Facilities Management Group, to review risk assessments, given this season's experiences
- **Ben, Corinna and Pauline** to begin the process of preparation for the next Forward Planning cycle.

17. Dates of next meetings

The next full Board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 5 February at 4.30pm; the Executive Group will meet in January, date t.b.c.

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 6.00pm.