



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

6 March 2024

Gairloch Museum. 4.30pm.

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

1. Conflicts of Interest

No potential conflict of interest was declared with respect to the Agenda.

2. Minutes of the Board meeting of 31 January

The minutes of the meeting held on 31 January were agreed to be a correct record, proposed by Anne and seconded by Jean. Matters arising:

- i) The Museum has opened for the new season today.
- ii) There has been some success in recruiting new volunteers.

3. Recommendations of the Executive Group

The Executive Group met on 28 February. Notes from the meeting had been circulated to inform of progress on the action points from the last Board meeting. Most of the newly convened focus groups have met and issues arising are covered in this meeting's agenda. We await further information from Kevin Ginty with respect to his proposed Visitor Evaluation project proposal.

4. Financial report

Pete had circulated his report and figures for income and expenditure to the end of February. He has revised the projected budgets to add a more ambitious 'target' to some aspects, additional to the original projection based on last year's figures. There will be careful, ongoing monitoring of income and expenditure.

Following discussion and consideration of the cost of entry to other heritage institutions, a majority of the Board voted to raise admission charges for adult entry to the Museum to £8. Membership fees will remain unchanged as part of the effort to increase such longer-term commitment.

The Events Group will decide whether to raise the 'standard' fee from £3 for most talks etc. It was not recommended that we increase the donations 'ask' for Ceilidh House sessions.

Following the first meeting of the Financial Sustainability Group on 15 February, a business planning sub-group is to be set up. Gordon has agreed to chair this and, together with Corinna, Eilidh and Peter, will work on a model for longer term strategic planning.

The Board endorsed the recommendation that there be an increase of 8% in the wages of staff who have a 1 April pay point, and that we will pay the Real Living Wage as a minimum for seasonal café assistants and cleaner.

5. Curator's report

Corinna's report had been circulated. It covered Documentation; Professional Development and Training; Projects; Care & Conservation; Projects; Funding; Events; Exhibitions and Enquiries. Further to this:

- i) A new painting, by Malcolm Lamont, has been added to the Collection. The frame needs repair.
- ii) Furniture has been purchased for the Gaelic Corner in the café.

iii) Our letter to local MSPs about the possible budget cuts by Highland Council to independent museums had prompted very positive and supportive responses from Maree Todd and Ariane Burgess. We now understand that the current funding level will be sustained.

6. Gaelic development report

Anna's report had been circulated, as has her information about VisitScotland's Gaelic Tourism strategy. She had very much enjoyed her two days in Gairloch recently as part of World Gaelic Week and appreciated the enthusiasm and interest shown.

The Board expressed its dismay at the planned reduction in Scottish Government funding for Bòrd na Gàidhlig which will impact posts and grass-roots Gaelic heritage and cultural activities. The four museums in our Gaelic Development project consortium will be writing to lobby for this decision to be reconsidered. It was agreed that the Board will make representations also. Anna will provide some related information.

7. Events and Outreach

Reports had been circulated from the 15 February meeting of the revived Events and Outreach Group, and from Sarah with respect to her 'Wellbeing Coordinator' sessions and working with schools. The extension of her post should bring about more 'outreach' within the community, including with Strathburn House.

8. Exhibitions

i) The report from the Group's meeting on 17 February had been circulated. There were no issues arising.

ii) The outline proposal for the application to MGS for funding for a two year 0.5f.t.e. Exhibitions, Events & Outreach Coordinator post will form the basis for the required Expression of Interest which has to be progressed before being allowed to put in a formal submission. Corinna and Pauline will work on this further. They requested input from Board members as to possible themes for events and activities, and ideas on how best to engage our dispersed townships and communities beyond Gairloch.

Other requirements for the proposed application include our Forward and Action Plans - a further imperative to revise the drafts we submitted for Accreditation. Pauline will work on these and then circulate for Board consideration and action.

9. Risk Assessments

i) The task force has completed its drafting of 39 risk assessments which will be as hard copy at the Welcome Desk and available to everyone on [Emergency Plan & Risk Assessments \(Feb 2024\)](#) Pauline stressed how critical it is that these are used, reviewed and constantly revised in the light of experience. The Emergency Plan is, similarly, to be viewed as a working document. Allan thanked Pauline, Jean and Babs for undertaking this work.

ii) Company Risk Register: Pauline has researched what this might entail, and has asked Ben and Gordon for their input to her draft. Once this is received, she will circulate the document to all on the Board for further consideration and then present it to the next Executive Group meeting. Ben recommended that the risks identified, and their mitigations, be reviewed every six months.

10. Operational matters

i) Café: Natalie has resigned, so an advertisement will be placed to recruit café staff as soon as possible. The café will open to the public on 29 March (Good Friday), for five days a week. The food and drink offer each day will depend on staffing capacity. We hope to be able to offer a wider menu for the peak summer holiday weeks, when additional seasonal staff could be taken on. Eilidh and volunteers are providing for a bus group visit booked for 14 March.

ii) The next meeting of employed staff is scheduled for 13 March. It was confirmed that provision has been made within the 2024-25 budget to pay for attendance outside usual working hours

iii) Facilities maintenance: progress has been made on some outstanding repairs, including to the gents' urinal. Guy, Babs and Eilidh have met and agreed a routine for undertaking, recording and

reporting any issues related to the regular premises/equipment checks and accident/incident forms. There will also be a procedure for reporting repairs that are needed.

- iv) Volunteer recruitment and training: Eilidh reported that we may have gained as many as six new volunteers from recent informal recruitment. Three volunteers are willing to take on more responsibility for running the Front of House operations, though any absence will have to be covered by additional hours for employed staff. The mandatory training on the Emergency Plan/Evacuation Procedures and Risk Assessments is scheduled for 22 March. In Guy's absence, this will be undertaken by herself and Babs. They will arrange a similar session with UHI staff. Unfortunately, First Aid training has been delayed until 20 May. This means, in the interim, there may well be some days when we do not have a qualified First Aider on site.
- v) Quality Assurance: like many in the heritage tourism sector, we are surprised and shocked that Visit Scotland have decided to end their 'star' ratings, without sector consultation it would seem, to concentrate on giving digital advice. ASVA has responded very rapidly to this situation and we await further developments.
- vi) Marketing: Gordon, Corinna and Eilidh have met and have many suggestions to work through. In response to an advert placed on the Leicester University Jobs Desk, Eilidh and Corinna have had informal discussions with two potential volunteers (one a student, one more experienced) to support our marketing efforts. They will be working remotely to extend our social media platforms.
- vii) From afar, Irene sent through a report on her preparations for the early season retail offer.

#### 11. Any Other Business

- i) The Personnel Group met this afternoon. They reviewed progress made on personnel policies, contracts, job profiles and staff-related risk assessments over the past year. They also considered drafts of evidence statements which demonstrate that we are a 'Fair Work First' employer, as required before any funding submission is made to MGS.  
The issue of concrete dust in the staff work areas was raised as a matter of concern. The resealing required should be built into the Premises Maintenance Plan.
- ii) Anne and Corinna have been liaising with our link MHH Climate Ambassador. This may lead to their proposing some revision of our Environmental Sustainability policy.
- iii) Jeremy's proposal to offer an archaeological trail guided walk after his weekly Saturday morning session on the desk was welcomed.

#### 12. Summary of Action Points

- The Executive Group will decide whether to collaborate in the proposed Visitor Evaluation project.
- The Events Group to decide on the standard cost for talks and similar activities.
- Gordon will convene a Business Planning Group.
- Anna will provide further information about the intended Scottish Government cuts to Bòrd na Gàidhlig's funding so that a letter can be sent, voicing Board concerns at the long-term consequences.
- All Board members are requested to input ideas for themes and outreach work relevant to the proposed application to MGS for an Exhibitions, Events & Outreach post.
- Pauline will circulate an updated review of our 2023-24 Action Plan, and a revised draft of that for 2024-25 for further comment.
- Pauline will continue working on the 'Company Risk Register' once comments are received on her initial draft.
- Eilidh and Jean to work on café recruitment.

#### 13. Dates of next meetings

The next full Board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 8 May at 4.30; the Executive Group will meet on 2 April, before Pauline is away.

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 6.15 pm.