



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

8 November 2023
Gairloch Museum. 4.30pm.

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

Corinna was welcomed to her first Board meeting, having commenced employment with us on 31 October.

1. Conflicts of Interest

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

2. Election of Board officers 2023-2024

In accordance with our Articles, all officers stand down at the AGM.

Roy informed the meeting that the time has come for him to step down as Chairman, a role he has fulfilled for so many years. He nominated Allan as the new Chair, which was endorsed by all present, with the intention that he, Roy would chair today's meeting and then hand over. Thereafter, in sequence, it was proposed and carried without dissent that: Roy become a Vice-chair to support the transition; Jeremy continues as Vice-chair; Pete continues as Treasurer and Pauline continues as Secretary.

3. Minutes of the Board meeting of 10 October

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 October were agreed to be a correct record, proposed by Allan and seconded by Anne. Matters arising:

- i) *The Curious Case of Osgood Mackenzie* had played to two full houses at Inverewe on 4 November. The director had spoken to Pauline about the possibility of a further performance in April or May next year, in Gairloch. The Board endorsed further discussion on this over the winter.
- ii) Jean plans to hold the first employed staff discussion meeting this side of Christmas, though it is difficult to find a mutually convenient time, given that almost everyone works to a part-time contract. The first volunteer gathering, to be convened by Pete, is scheduled for 17 November.

3. Financial report

Pete had circulated his report and figures for income and expenditure to the end of October. He clarified that the money for the interim funding of support for events and exhibitions work is coming from two sources, GAMS and the Rimmer Trust (both via Mark Feeny). It is likely that our operations through the winter months will result in depletion of our reserves by about £22K so, by the end of February, our unrestricted reserves will be below the target advised.

4. Organisational matters

- i) Numbers attending the AGM on 30 October were the highest since before the pandemic, which was very pleasing. Richard Else, standing-in admirably at the last minute for Duncan Mackenzie, had been very impressed by the community support for the Museum. Irene, Jean and Anne were thanked for providing the refreshments.

- ii) Following discussion with Ben and Anna about the points raised at the last meeting, Rachael has redrafted the Collections Development policy to encompass six, not four, collections categories. The amended version had been circulated and was ratified without further changes. The revised Documentation Policy was also ratified. We are very grateful to Rachael for reworking all our curatorial policies, plans and the Documentation Procedural Manual. She continues to support Corinna in her early weeks in post.
- iii) Further revisions have been made to the draft Access and Audience Review, in the light of feedback and additional factual information now received. The Review will be added to the documents in the Board folder in the near future. A number of ideas have come out of this work, to be considered in discussions about the 2024-2025 Actcion Plan.
- iv) Pauline, Roy, Guy, Eilidh and Rachael met on 12 October to review the Security Audit work undertaken. Follow up enquiries have resolved the remaining points which were mainly about the backing up of CCTV footage and other systems. What is key now is to raise the awareness of all staff who work here, both paid and volunteer, about the issues, probably best achieved through 'winter school' and induction sessions, to ensure that it is not simply a paper tick-box exercise. Pauline's effort to progress the reworking of the Emergency Plan has stalled because of other priorities so there is still a fair amount to do before it can be considered to be fully updated for the current premises.
Pauline (as scribe and collator), with Barbara and Jean providing the experience and expertise, is now starting to address the long list of formal Risk Assessments that need to be put in place with respect to each location in and outside the building, events/activities and general risks to health and safety, such as COSSH, lone working and stress. As well as considering the best way to ensure that all staff know about and take account of risks in the workplace, the procedures to continue to review/assess fire safety requirements, process incident (etc) forms and implement recommendations for training, procurement, manual handling and COSHH, as examples, have to be undertaken by named people with responsibilities clearly identified. Guy offered to be the designated Health and Safety officer.
- v) Ally has started the Museums Heritage Highland programme of training to become a 'Climate Ambassador'. At his request, Pauline has completed an initial questionnaire on our behalf.
- vi) We will need to draft an interim review of the current (2023-2024) Action Plan in December, and outline the 2024-2025 Action Plan somewhat earlier than we have customarily worked on these, in order to provide information required for Accreditation purposes. Pauline will consult with those leading on various aspects and welcomes offers to help her progress Forward Planning.

Roy explained various proposals which have been mooted recently, each of which would require external funding:

- a) a geology time-line installation for the Outdoor Museum. Roy has undertaken a lot of the necessary planning and Peter Maguire is advising on potential funders. It was agreed that this could be progressed for next year.
- b) a request from Estelle Slegers Helsen for Gairloch Museum to lead on a project to extend her existing studies of W.S. Thompson's photographs and postcards. This involve collaboration with other museums in Wester Ross. The Board is interested in the potential for oral history, an exhibition and other related activities which could be outputs from Estelle's work, but where the funding might be secured is uncertain. Roy will reply to her email to indicate that we consider her timescale seems unrealistic, and to ask for further clarification on some aspects.
- c) a proposal from a model boat-builder that Gairloch Museum be the repository for a quality model of the *Black Diamond*, a top-masted schooner. Research would need to be undertaken to ascertain how relevant this boat is to our collections area. If it proves a valid object, then funding for its mounting, display case and interpretation would need to be sourced. It was thought that the estimates provided were rather low.

- d) a suggestion that further analysis should be undertaken on samples from the Loch Maree ironworks which might link to glass found at the Inverlael archaeology dig. More research needs to be undertaken to ascertain how likely this would be to result in meaningful outcomes for our heritage, and the cost of professional analysis, before a decision is made to seek external financial support.

In addition to these four possible funding quests, we are already anticipating grant applications for Gaelic conversation classes and to MGS for a 2 year post for Events and Exhibitions development. It was stressed that we have to be realistic about the demands of managing, monitoring and evaluating any funded project, over and above the time and expertise required to put in the actual application.

6. Curatorial matters

Corinna reported that the Axiell data management system has now been installed and it would seem that the migration from AdLib has gone smoothly. In time, once she is satisfied with the quality of the information, all our object records, including photographs, will be available online to anyone interested. She has also met a new MGS officer to discuss contemporary collecting and is meeting Anna tomorrow (9 November) to consider further the list of possible action points for Gaelic development which Anna has just circulated to the Board. Activities, such as music and film events, will be added to the list.

7. Events and outreach

Eilidh informed the meeting of the Seashell Identification day on Saturday, 2 December, to be run by the Wester Ross Biodiversity Action Forum with complementary activities spread through the event. Sarah is looking to broaden the scope of the *Whatever the Weather Wednesdays* with activity mornings and possibly a film show.

9. Exhibitions

Allan had circulated the minutes of the 26 October meeting. We have a confirmed exhibitions programme for 2024 and 2025 and plenty of enquiries for 2026. Planning is already underway for the 50th anniversary of the formal founding of the Museum in 1977. At the next meeting (December), consideration needs to be given to the proposed application to MGS for a 2 year appointment to support Exhibitions and Events.

10. Operational matters

- i) Eilidh is delighted to confirm that Gairloch Museum is now a 5* VisitScotland attraction! The assessment took place recently and we should celebrate the contribution of everyone over the past two years who has worked to meet these highest standards.
- ii) Jean had circulated the report of the Café group meeting of 31 October. No further matters were raised.

11. Any Other Business

- i) It seems that the Activities Room is rather cold for the *Whatever the Weather Wednesday* sessions. We recognise that the participants need to feel comfortable, so the heating can be put on as early as necessary to ensure this.
- ii) Corinna would like to apply for a significant grant from the Weston Loan Programme with Art Fund which could enable us to loan works of outstanding quality and significance from national institutions. It is probably too short a time scale though to meet this year's deadline (15 December).

12. Date of next meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 13 December at 4.30.

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 6.20 pm.