



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

27 July 2022
Gairloch Museum. 4.30pm.

- Present (In person) Roy Macintyre; Karen Buchanan; Pauline Butler; Sally Cameron; Jeremy Fenton; Peter Lynn; Irene Macintyre; Anne MacLennan; Jean Ross; Eilidh Smith; Scott Steedman.
(Zoom) Jen Shaw; Ben Thomas.
- Apologies Liz Forrest; Guy Seaman; Allan Templeton.

1. Conflicts of Interest

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

2. Minutes of the Board meeting of 8 June

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 June were agreed to be a correct record, proposed by Anne and seconded by Peter. Matter arising:
Roy has prepared further drawings for the plinth at Chapel of Sand, Laide.

3. Financial report

- i) Roy's overview and the P&L Report for June 2022 had been circulated. There are clear indications now that this season will see fewer visitors and lower income than in 2021, with entries and spend very variable day-to-day. The likely reasons were discussed, and the trend would seem to be comparable with other tourist venues in the Highlands.
- ii) Café costs, particularly staffing-related, are being monitored closely.
- iii) Despite several requests for information, Roy has had no response for several months from the firm which is supposed to be preparing our 2021 accounts. As a contingency, he is in contact with AZETS who have undertaken various financial reports for us in the past: they may be able to undertake the necessary work at short notice. Karen will enquire of other museums as to who they contract as their independent examiners.
- iv) Peter has agreed to take on the duties of treasurer - for which we are very grateful - and will work in tandem with Davie for the next few months.

4. Curator's Report

Karen's report has been circulated. It covered Building and grounds; Collections; Interpretation and displays; Professional development & training; Projects; Miscellaneous.
There were no matters arising.

5. Reports from Forward Planning Groups

- i) Notes from the first meeting of the Personnel Group (30 June) had been circulated. Pauline reported that the group members whose recent experience has been outside the heritage sector saw no reason to change our current recruitment procedures, policies and guidance, which have evolved as our staffing has expanded, including appointments to grant-funded

posts. The group will now focus on how best to support our staff, both paid and volunteers, through training, development and review processes.

- ii) Peter has circulated a draft document with respect to the scope and objectives of the 'Ever Greener' planning group. Scott offered his assistance with establishing the baselines from which progress can be measured, including benchmarking against other organisations. The potential for providing facilities for electric charging of cars on site was discussed.

6. Solar panels project

Guy had circulated a summary of the current situation. Progress has, unfortunately, stalled as the preferred contractor is having problems with securing the requisite materials. Enquiries are being made more widely to see if another contractor can deliver within the required time scale.

7. Events & Outreach

- i) Jen has put together a very impressive programme for the 'Make Room for Stories' 10 day long festival in September. Extensive promotion and marketing strategies are now being finalised. Statistical and qualitative evaluation is built into the project - a requirement for the funders, but also to analyse, for our own purposes, the attraction of such an extended event to our various audiences. This includes continuing to address our objectives of reducing social isolation and improving mental health within the community, and targeting the access of more vulnerable groups to our events. Another benefit could well be the development of our oral history collection.
- ii) Other events being prepared include the programme of activities with GAMS, Maths Week Scotland (October), a further archaeology dig and the winter talks.

8. Exhibitions

The report of the Exhibitions Group meeting of 21 July had been circulated. There have been several sales of paintings in the current *Skyclad* exhibition.

9. Operational matters

- i) Front of House: Eilidh reported that our new Visitor Engagement assistant was making a positive difference. We will need to find ways to sustain such staffing once the time-limited external grant support ends, given the significant contribution to Museum activities. This also pertains to the Events & Outreach Coordinator role. We are currently seeking to recruit more volunteer room stewards. In response to a query, Eilidh confirmed that the screen at the front desk was still a reassurance for some, given the prevalence of Covid, but recognises that there are mixed views as to its necessity.
- ii) Quality Assurance: the issues on the list continue to be addressed. Some, such as larger labels, will be undertaken once the tourist season is over.
- iii) Marketing: thanks to the MGS funding, our publicity is being distributed more widely. It was suggested that TikTok might be another avenue to explore to promote the Museum. It was noted that there is no 'Destination Gairloch area' marketing as such, though Museum Facebook page and Tripadvisor reviews are high on the list for relevant Google searches.
- iv) Retail: Irene reported that there are fewer high-value sales this season. Wyvis Distillery is interested to make the Museum shop its main west coast outlet.
- v) Café: Sally confirmed that there is no predictability to café operations at the moment. The business model continues to be refined under the challenging and unprecedented circumstances that have prevailed since the café opened in 2021. She is keeping a close eye on the rising costs of materials, staff costs and patterns of business, and making adaptations ongoing.

Everyone recognises that it is a difficult time for all catering establishments, given these external pressures. Board members see it as a priority to establish a staffing rota that will enable the café to be open every day that the Museum welcomes visitors.

- vi) Premises: the ventilators at the front of the building still require repair/adjustment.
- vii) Outdoor Museum: placement of the additional geological stones is promised to be imminent!

10. Date of next meeting

There being no other business, the date for the next Board meeting is Wednesday, 14 September at 4.30pm.

The meeting ended at 6.20pm.