



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

10 October 2023
Gairloch Museum. 4.30pm.

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

Apologies Irene Macintyre.

Neil Lebeter has resigned as a director, as of 12 September. He expressed his continuing support for the Museum and we thank him for his contributions.

1. Conflicts of Interest

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

2. Minutes of the Board meeting of 24 August

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 August were agreed to be a correct record, proposed by Anne and seconded by Allan. Matters arising:

- i) The NTS has arranged for two performances of *The Curious Case of Osgood Mackenzie* to be held at Inverewe on 4 November.
- ii) The damage to the external wall has been repaired, as has the café boiler. There are still lights to be fixed and we need to find the password to change the date on one of the CCTV screens.
- iii) We are delighted that Ally MacNeil has been successful in his application to be one of three climate ambassadors to be trained as part of the Museums and Heritage Highlands initiative. Gairloch Museum will be a pilot location.
- iv) Pete has negotiated a contract with British Gas, backdated to August, for the Museum to be paid for providing power to the grid. It was agreed that now would be a good time to publicise our solar panel installation more widely in the press and social media. Eilidh and Guy will work on this.

3. Financial report

Pete had circulated his report and provided figures for income and expenditure to the end of September. The timing differences for VAT and credit card reconciliations were the reason for the difference between EPOS and bank statement details. He was pleased to report that our relative income had improved in the past two months.

The 2022 Accounts had been submitted before the deadline. We remain on the borderline of it being advisable to set up a separate trading company.

The Board was pleased to note that, of late, the café had generated a profit and that staffing costs were within budget.

Less money had been received to fund the 'Whatever the Weather' Wednesday activities than we had expected. After enquiry, it transpires that the funders had granted the lower of two different sums they had been given, basing their allocation on the expression of interest not the request in the actual submission. The application to GAMS for match-funding had not been progressed owing to the resignation of the Curator, with no-one else at the time aware of the situation. We must ensure, in

future, that every funding application is the responsibility of at least two people.

Pete had discussed the consequences of a recent power cut on the router and network management with Alex Gray who recommended an upgrade which would cost about £500. It was agreed to progress this.

4. Organisational matters

- i) Arrangements for the AGM on 30 October in Gairloch Community Hall are in hand. 560 invitations were emailed/posted out last week. We need to encourage the submission of a proxy vote declaration by those who are not able to be there to ensure the required attendance.

A projector, screen and sound system are available in the Hall, which Roy intends to test out in the afternoon. Jeremy will have back-up equipment available, just in case. Irene, Jean and Anne offered to organise refreshments.

- ii) Rachael has been working for some time on the required revisions of the curatorial policies and plans. The Documentation Procedural Manual has been fully updated and will be invaluable for our new Curator, the Documentation Plan and Policy are close to completion, and drafts of the Collections Development Policy, and Care and Conservation Policy and Plan have been circulated to all Board members for consideration with a view to ratification.

The Care and Conservation Policy and Plan were ratified.

However, three aspects of the Collections Development Policy need to be considered further:

- whether or not there should be separate identification of the 'Outdoor Museum' collection;
- the consequences of the Board recommending, following discussion, that the Museum should accept the offer from the Treasure Trove Unit of National Museums Scotland to take an assemblage of material from a Bronze Age burial chamber that had been excavated when new council houses were built at Shieldaig in the 1980s, the village being within our collections area. As the assemblage includes cremated human remains, an amendment would be required of our current policy which explicitly excludes the acquiring of such items. The Board agreed therefore that the relevant section should be revised, having informed Shieldaig Community Council of the intended acquisition. Anna advised that we check out MGS guidance relevant to human remains;
- whether or not there should be explicit reference to digital collections, given that we have oral history archives, for example.

Pauline will discuss these points with Rachael, before resubmitting the Policy for ratification by the Board in the light of the outcomes.

- iii) Five Board members had offered to read and comment on Pauline's draft Access and Audience Review, which had proved to be very helpful. Some points raised and relevant in the Review were not covered in our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy so she proposed some amendments to Section D of this policy, better to reflect our practices and intentions. The revisions were ratified.
- iv) As well as the Access and Audience Review, (being a consideration of the extent to which, since opening in the new premises we have implemented our intended project outcomes based on our HLF application and 2019 Report), Pauline has also been bringing together what is needed for other Accreditation evidence. Guy has done a first check for the Security Audit, and a meeting is to be held on Thursday 12 October to progress this; our Emergency Plan is in the process of being updated and Barbara, Jean and Pauline will form a working party to compile the suite of Risk Assessments in November, taking forward the work that is already underway.

6. Curator appointment update

Corinna has signed her contract and confirmed 30 October as her start date. Rachael will continue to be employed for a number of days ongoing to ensure a smooth transition and good induction, so will be coming in on the Monday and Tuesday of Corinna's first week with us. Pauline will draft an email for distribution to staff (employees and volunteers) for their information.

7. Events and outreach

Sarah provided an update on the 'Whatever the Weather' Wednesdays, including about the successful 'Musical Tea'. Thanks to a generous benefactor, we will be able to offer lunch in the café through the winter months which will be very welcome.

To continue with a similar Community Mental Health and Wellbeing programme from April 2024, as we all would like, we will need to be successful in a new funding application, due this side of Christmas. As before, there has to be a different focus. Sarah is exploring various options.

With information from Peter, Sarah has now submitted a funding application to Highland Cross for the costs of installing carpet tiles and acoustic buffers in the Activity Room. This, if successful, will contribute to our aims to be more accessible to people with hearing impairment. We should know the outcome by early December.

9. Exhibitions

The next meeting of the Group is scheduled for 26 October. One agenda item will be to consider how best to progress the plan to appoint a coordinator to support exhibitions and events now that we have been granted funding support from both GAMS and the Rimmer Trust. It is intended to submit an application to MGS for a longer term 'development' appointment next spring.

10. Operational matters

- i) It's been a long season so everyone is fatigued but there are no big issues to resolve. Eilidh and Babs are delighted that 3, maybe 4, new volunteers have offered their services recently.
- ii) Over the winter, marketing will focus on ways to target campervan hire companies and minibus coach tours, perhaps with an incentive free first visit for the latter. Rabbits have visited and been impressed but at present have a full day on their Wester Ross itinerary.
- iii) Irene reported that retail sales in September were c.£3K better than 2022. Clothing and knitwear have done particularly well, alcohol sales are down.
- iv) The café group members recognise the need to plan early for next year. Sally is delighted that her approach, which is to build strong customer relationships, has helped to bring in sponsorship for the winter Wednesday lunches, for which we are very grateful. She hopes that a wider clientele can be attracted to the café through targeted marketing.

11. Any Other Business

- i) Friday, 8 December was agreed to be a suitable date for the end-of-season volunteers' lunch.
- ii) Jeremy has compiled a 4 minute long slide show of the conversion building work for display in the Museum. He has identified a suitable location and now needs a suitably sized smart TV.
- iii) Both Peter and Jean raised the issue of how we might develop our inter-staff (volunteers / employees / Board) communications, which, given that many are volunteers on a rota and almost all employees are part-time, is recognised not to be easy. Jean's proposal, to organise a networking get-together to share skills and ideas about every 8 weeks through the winter, on a different day each time, was given the go-ahead.

12. Date of next meeting

It was agreed to revert to Wednesday meetings, so the next Board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, 8 November at 4.30pm. The first agenda item will be to appoint the officers for the Board following the AGM.

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