



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

27 April 2022
Gairloch Museum. 4.30pm.

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

Apologies Barbara Mackenzie.

1. Conflicts of Interest

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

2. Minutes of the Board meeting of 9 March

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 March were agreed to be a correct record, proposed by Anne and seconded by Irene. Matter arising:

It is proposed to hold the AGM on Monday 24 October with Donald Murray having offered to be the speaker, following the postponement of his April session. Discussion took place as to the format and venue. Whilst it is convenient to hold a hybrid meeting in the Activities Room at the Museum to enable online attendees, this limits the numbers 'in person' and a 10% quorum of our membership would be c.55 people. Our constitution does not (in non-Covid circumstances) allow for online voting. We need to consider whether Gairloch Hotel could host the meeting and/or whether 'proxy' attendance could ensure the AGM is quorate.

3. Financial report

- i) The P&L Report for 1 January to end March 2022 had been circulated, as had notes of the Finance Group meeting of 25 April. Trading has been below forecast, though we have no comparable base from which to work and there is still a significant 'Covid' context. How to increase footfall and income during the off-season months must be a focus for all aspects of the Museum operation. Support was given to a proposal from Scott that he facilitate a group which will consider medium and longer-term models to generate revenue and ensure financial security.
- ii) We have received the first tranche of funding from MGS for the solar panels project and also from High Life Highland for service delivery; HMRC have paid the 2021 Gift Aid claim but Art Fund have still to pay the final 20% of the grant for our Events Coordinator post.
- ii) The accounts have been with PNL since 29 March. Roy is waiting for confirmation that they are able to process these in a timely manner.

4. Curator's Report

Karen's report has been circulated. It covered Building and grounds; Collections; Interpretation and displays; Education and training; Projects.

Matter arising:

Further explanation was provided about the proposed Tapestry of the Highlands project.

Volunteers to contribute to this are currently being sought and it is hoped that Gairloch will be a hub for the embroiderers. Other activities are being planned, through exhibitions, workshops and "Making Room for Stories" (if funded), which will engage those interested in textile skills. How best to involve schools is also under consideration.

5. Review of 2021-2022 Action Plan

Pauline had circulated a 'traffic lights' review of the Action Plan, with commentary. The unforeseen ongoing Covid restrictions had, inevitably, impacted on what had been achieved, though it was agreed that we had come through the past two years relatively strongly, having benefitted from a number of substantial grants. The Action Plan review was ratified, without amendment.

With the guidance of those directly involved in each aspect of our operations, Pauline will work towards a draft for the 2022-2023 Action Plan. A meeting is now scheduled for next week with some Board members and staff to consider longer-term 'cross-cutting challenges', hoping to maintain the momentum and creativity of the project years.

Scott raised some ideas as to how the Museum might lead a Gairloch community 'net zero' transition, in collaboration with other local organisations.

6. Solar panels project

Having been successful in securing the funding from MGS, the project to install solar panels on the roof of the building is now underway. Guy has submitted for planning consent, with building warrant application imminent. More precise costings should be provided next week from an Ullapool company. The project has to be completed by end March 2023.

There are no current plans for battery installation as this is very expensive and it was envisaged that, given most of the energy will be generated in the summer and immediately used, there will be very little surplus to store. However, it might be a possibility for the future.

7. Events & Outreach

Jen had circulated an overview of the developments during her first two months in post and provided further details about what is planned for the Gairloch Gathering, the Jubilee Tea, the computer course for GAMS and liaison with schools, including another 'Maths week' focus in October. Over the summer, the priorities will be to bring back into the Museum those who are harder to reach, and/or have been isolated by Covid, in addition to family-friendly activities and events.

The 'Hunt for Herring' Easter holiday activity had been very successful and generated family interest. It provides us with a strong base for future collaboration with external facilitators.

8. Exhibitions

The report of the Exhibitions Group meeting of 17 March had been circulated. All slots for 2022 and 2023 are filled, which is pleasing though Allan did not want to preclude 'opportunistic' events. 2024 is the 5th anniversary of the opening of the 'new Gairloch Museum'. Suggestions for appropriate celebratory exhibitions are invited, perhaps linking to our environmental ambitions. Scott will canvas delegates at a forthcoming international conference to see if there is interest in supporting developments in Gairloch.

9. Operational matters

- i) Front of House: Eilidh reported that she had been pleased at the rapid response of our providers when the EPOS system went down.
We have sufficient volunteers to staff the Front Desk, but are stretched for stewards and there are ideas as to how to develop the role to encourage new recruits.

It was agreed that we will provide each child attending a local school with a 'free card' for entry before the summer holiday, encouraging them to bring along their (paying) parents. Jen and Eilidh will work out how best to organise this.

- ii) Quality Assurance: The list of proposed improvements is being worked through. Jim and Eilidh are developing an Accessibility Guide and other online information relevant to inclusion.
- iii) Marketing: we are working on enhancing our promotional material and activity, including a new flyer. The next Marketing Group meeting is scheduled for 10 May and will include consideration of how to liaise with local hotels to prompt their guests to visit the Museum, even as part of a wedding or other event.
- iv) Retail: Irene reported that this had, generally, been steady, with the first two weeks of April seeing good sales. Books (adult stock) and soaps are popular but she noted that families seemed to be spending less, selecting toys rather than the more expensive books.
- v) Café: although it would be ideal to have the café opening hours match those of the Museum, there is simply not the staffing capacity currently to achieve this. An assistant deputy café manager has been appointed, to start early June, which will make a difference. The menu has also had to be adjusted to take into account the realities of staffing constraints.
- vi) Premises: Grass-cutting and external tidying is being undertaken by volunteers. Significant car park improvements await further quotes and are unlikely this year, given the cost. Roy has more stones to deliver and install.

It was generally agreed that the gents urinal is not working satisfactorily, though plumbers called in have always insisted that it is functioning as designed. It may be necessary to find a long-term solution, beyond more frequent bucket-flushing!

Karen has noted that a good proportion of the available car-parking spaces is being taken up by the vehicles of staff and volunteers, which might well discourage visitors. It was agreed that those working at the Museum should park off-site during the season and busy times.

10. Any Other Business

- i) In response to an enquiry from Anne, Roy explained that he had provided all the details required by RBoS some time back. He will try, yet again, to prompt the restoration of the Chapel of Sand bank account.
- ii) Jean requested that the Museum sell raffle tickets from now until the end of September in support of the reopening of Aultbea Hall. This was agreed and she and Eilidh will ensure the necessary arrangements are in place.

11. Date of next meeting

The date for the next Board meeting is Wednesday, 8 June at 4.30pm.

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 6.10pm.