



MINUTES OF THE (ZOOM) MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GAIRLOCH & DISTRICT HERITAGE COMPANY LTD

25 August 2021
Gairloch Museum. 4.30 pm.

Present Roy Macintyre; Karen Buchanan; Pauline Butler; Liz Forrest; Nevis Hulme; Irene Macintyre; Barbara Mackenzie; Jean Ross; Guy Seaman; Eilidh Smith; Allan Templeton; Mark Macleod.

Apologies Jeremy Fenton; Anne MacLennan; Willie Macrae; Ben Thomas

Guy was welcomed to the meeting.

Stuart has informed us that, owing to work commitments, he can no longer represent Gairloch High School at our meetings.

1. Conflicts of Interest

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

2. Minutes of the (Zoom) Board meeting of 7 July

The minutes of the meeting on 7 July were agreed to be a correct record, proposed by Nevis and seconded by Allan. Matter arising:

- The opening ceremony for the Outdoor Museum had been held on 4 August in good weather. It was a very pleasant occasion.

3. Company Governance

- i) Papers are about to be sent out for the 2021 AGM on 20 September. Dr Alison Sheridan, former Principal Archaeological Research Curator (Prehistory) at National Museums Scotland, will then give a 'live' talk: *Putting Gairloch Museum's prehistoric finds in context*. Arrangements are in hand to facilitate both 'in person' and online attendance. Willie has tendered his resignation from the Board, so there are 4 vacancies for elected members.
- ii) Having reviewed our Policies and Guidance, the HR professional consulted advised two minor updates to the Privacy Policy, otherwise had no changes to suggest with respect to the revised Health and Safety and Personnel - Employee sections, or any others. The amended composite Policies will be put into the Board folder.
- iii) Pauline will collate ideas for a more formal induction programme for new Board members, both document-based and by targeted in-person sessions.
- iv) Very detailed budget projections have been produced in the past two years in order to access the various grants available. They have proved admirably close to the reality, despite the ongoing uncertainties of Covid-related restrictions. We have no 'baseline normality' in our new premises but overview budgets will be prepared for 2022 and 2023.
- v) An internal security audit needs to be carried out: Karen will undertake this with Ally and Roy.

4. Financial report

- i) The 2020 Accounts have been completed and submitted to OSCR and Companies House in good time. The Board endorsed the Accounts which will, for the first time ever, be available in final form for the AGM.
- ii) Given the complex finances of the 'new Museum' project end, Covid-related grants, Outdoor Museum project awards, as well as the vagaries of operational income and expenditure in an extraordinary year, the estimate of the time necessary to maintain the records did not prove realistic and the fee paid to our bookkeeper did not justly reflect the work required. As 2021 is no different, and the café income and expenditure is added to the daily transactions, the Board agreed to increase the fee (September 2021- August 2022) to allow for 4 days per month bookkeeping. The work included reduces some external costs (e.g. to PNL). We are pleased that Davie is willing to continue in the role.
- iii) Roy reported that the bank balance continues to show a healthy credit. Both admissions and retail income are close to our projected figures despite the circumstances and restrictions, and we were able to pay the last tranche of our AHF loan on 20 August - a considerable achievement!

5. Curator's Report

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

Matters arising:

- i) Rachael had been employed for 5 days during Karen's holiday leave periods and had completed a number of overdue collections-based tasks, as well as being available as back-up for Front-of-House enquiries. She always proves to be an asset to the organisation.
- ii) The review of different charging options for members who attend events will take into account the implications for Gift Aid.

6. Gaelic language and signage developments

A position paper had been circulated. After discussion, and recognition that there are some in the community who have strong views on the extent of our use of the language, it was agreed that the Interpretation Team would continue to develop enhancements to our inclusion of Gaelic for displays and internal signage. QR codes are a possible way forward. With respect to additional external signage, Nevis will pursue possible funding avenues and our architects/design team should be asked to advise on positioning before we make decisions. Barbara is working on a 'Beginners'-level Gaelic-language quiz.

7. Exhibitions

The notes of the most recent meeting of the EPG have been circulated, which include the programme planned for the next two years. The *Shiant Isles* exhibition across the two galleries has been extremely successful and the associated events of high quality and very well supported. The new 'Guide for Exhibitors' includes insurance requirements. Karen advised that she will be proposing revisions to the Exhibitions Policy.

8. Operational matters

- i) Front of House: Eilidh reported that the Museum has been very busy. She and Karen have had discussions with a VisitScotland adviser as we target a 5* rating at the next assessment.
- ii) Data analysis: all necessary procedures for the two student placements from Stirling University have been completed and work is beginning on the data audit and strategy projects.
- iii) Marketing: Eilidh will circulate a list of the actions being worked through.

- iv) Retail: Irene reported that shop sales are going very well, requiring ongoing stocking. The VisitScotland advisor had been impressed by our book range. In addition to Alison Dunlop's own publication, other books were bought to link with the *Shiant Isles Festival* events, and this had proved extremely successful. Consideration is being given as to how we can generate business through the winter months.
- v) Café: *Am Bàrd* continues to receive very good feedback and the staffing now seems stable. Suggestions from the public are being taken on board. A number of practical improvements have been made. Expenditure and income are broadly in line with expectations this first year. It is proposed to use the café as the venue for an evening get-together for volunteers/staff/Board members in early November.
- vi) Premises: there are no significant current issues. Ally and Guy have expertise which will be very useful as the new Focus Group is formed.

9. Any Other Business

- i) Events: There is a range of events now being promoted for the *Highland Archaeology Festival* which will be the focus for our activities over the next few weeks. Mark is collating data on the attendances, fees and donations throughout the year, and will include these in a report on what has been achieved and lessons learned from our programme. This will help us to plan for the future.
- ii) Nevis will check that all settings are as they should be for the CCTV system, given recent dropouts.

10. Date of next meeting

The next meeting, and whether it will be 'in-person', Zoom or hybrid, will be arranged after the AGM.

The meeting ended at 6.05 pm.