



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

12 June 2024

Gairloch Museum. 4.30pm.

Present Allan Templeton; Corinna Annetts; Pauline Butler; Peter Lynn; Irene Macintyre; Roy Macintyre; Jean Ross; Guy Seaman; Scott Steedman (Zoom).

Apologies Jeremy Fenton; Anne MacLennan; Anna MacQuarrie; Gordon McIntosh; Eilidh Smith; Ben Thomas.

1. Conflicts of Interest

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

2. Board membership

Jeremy has informed us that he is retiring from the Board but confirmed that he will still commit to his broad range of volunteering activities. On behalf of the Board, Allan expressed appreciation of Jeremy's long-term service as a Board member.

Corinna will replace Eilidh as the co-opted employee representative as of this meeting, and the nomination of Gordon for co-option to the Board was agreed.

2. Minutes of the Board meeting of 8 May

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 May were agreed to be a correct record, proposed by Corinna and seconded by Jean.

Matter arising: this year's AGM (28 October) will begin at 7pm, as the talk on Illicit distilling is planned for 7.30.

3. Report of the Executive Group

The Executive Group met on 28 May. Notes from the meeting have been circulated to inform of progress on action points. Matters arising:

- i) The draft Social Media policy was agreed and will be made available to all employees and volunteers. This addresses an issue raised when the Company Risk Register was drafted earlier this year.
- ii) Following discussion with a potential benefactor, several Executive Group members have worked to prepare a detailed proposal for the appointment of a three year, part-time Fundraising Officer, should we be able to secure the necessary finance. Allan will circulate the draft to some contacts for further consideration.
- iii) Having recently re-advertised for a cleaner, we have an expression of interest in the work, with an almost immediate start date possible.

4. Financial report

Pete's report on our income and expenditure breakdown to the end of May has been circulated.

Overall, the balance to date is better than in 2023 but not at the 2022 level. He is investigating the possibility of setting up an interest-paying charity account into which we could deposit our reserves.

An application to reduce our electricity capacity by approximately half has been submitted to SSEN. If this is successful, our monthly standing charge would be reduced significantly.

Roy advocated lodging an appeal against our current, much increased rates bill. We were not aware that the Museum was still being rated as the Roads Depot until the revaluation exercise last year, nor that having a liquor licence reduced the rebate allowable.

5. Curator's report

Corinna's report has been circulated. It covered: New Acquisitions; Loans; Care and Conservation; Projects; Funding; Enquiries; CPD; Other. Further to this:

- i) Three applications have been received for the Gaelic Conversation Convener role, now that it has been offered as a 'remote' post. She and Pauline will be interviewing in the next few days.
- ii) The collaboration with Edinburgh University to work on transcribing our Gaelic collection is progressing well.
- iii) There have been a number of useful responses to her letter to 'Friends and Supporters' requesting support for the Museum, including a new FoH volunteer and some donations. It was agreed that we would accept the offer from Badachro Gin to sponsor our illicit distilling display. If possible, we will use the opportunity to enhance the exhibition. We agreed that we should be alert to other local businesses which might be interested in similar supporting activities.
- iv) Allan thanked Corinna and Pauline for the considerable work required to submit the application to MGS for an Events and Outreach Coordinator. Their decision will be known by the end of June.
- v) We recognise that we have still to resolve the most appropriate way and location to acknowledge, in a public way, the range of generous donations that we receive from time to time.
- vi) Having undertaken some research into the issue, Pete will be contacting the potential endowment funders, who are USA-based, as to how they might make their proposed donation in a tax efficient way. Scott advocated ensuring due diligence with such offers, given the risks of fraudulent activity. The point was taken, but Roy was able to assure him that, in this case, he knew the family concerned and was confident that it was a genuine offer.

6. Events and Outreach

The report of the Events Group meeting of 22 May has been circulated. Suggestions for potential speakers for the intended winter talks programme, a mix of online and in-person, were invited.

7. Exhibitions

The report from the EPG meeting of 22 May has been circulated. Sadie Paige is interested to join the group and will be invited to the next meeting. Board approval will be required once the additional insurance costs for the Tapestry exhibition are known.

Contact has been made with those now running the Sawyer Gallery at Inverewe, and collaborative promotion of exhibitions is being planned.

8. Environmental Sustainability

A brief progress report from the 'Ever Greener' task force, which met on 3 June, has been circulated. Further details as to specifics of our premises use are still being collated. We are fortunate that our building conversion was purpose-designed, and, to a considerable extent, environmental sustainability was built in. We do need to ensure that our principles and practices are known to, and implemented by, all our staff and our West Highland College colleagues and we should take every opportunity to publicise the example we hope we are setting to our community and visitors. As one possible development, the group intends to consider a plant-based project on the seaward side of the Outdoors Museum, with a view to our 2027 anniversary, and is open to others suggestions.

9. Operational matters

- i) Front of House: notes had been circulated from Eilidh, with reference to admissions figures, volunteer deployment and marketing. Further points arising:
  - the decision has been made to close at 4.30pm for the time being, to ease the pressure on our FoH employees, whose contribution to the Museum's quality of service is greatly appreciated.

- Pete has volunteered to open outside of our usual hours, to welcome some North American visitors.

- ii) Café: Jean has circulated minutes of the most recent café meeting (23 May). Another advert has been placed for café assistants to fill the summer holiday gaps which cannot be covered even by the juggling efforts of our very hard-working and capable current staffing. Jean was thanked for her additional voluntary contribution to the café operation through two sessions of cleaning each week. It is clear, though, that there will be times when, either through unavoidable staffing shortages or exceptionally busy days when all the catering offer is depleted, that the café will have to be shut to the public. It is very pleasing that costs are now being matched by income and the customers are invariably very appreciative.
- iii) Retail: the shop continues to bring in more income than last year. Irene reported that books and cards, in particular, are selling very quickly.
- iv) Premises and Health & Safety: Guy reported that he is dealing with premises repairs as and when they occur. The scheduled review of Risk Assessments has begun.  
Roy noted that there is minor damage to the external render in a number of places. Some of it is owing to the removal of the now-redundant signage for UHI, which we would expect to be repaired. Guy and Roy will undertake a survey of the external walls to check what remedial work is required.

#### 10. Any Other Business

- i) Staff training: one of the café assistants will undertake independent study for the food hygiene certification; a further 5 members of staff are now First Aid at Work qualified, which provides the cover we have been aiming for.
- ii) The issue of the security and storage of the considerable quantity of data and records which Board members have on their home computers was raised again, (reference the Company Risk Register), including where personal email accounts are being used for Museum business. Everyone should be ensuring appropriate back-ups are maintained in the short term, but it is increasingly evident that a major upgrading is required of our Museum network to accommodate the ever-increasing volume of documentation across our operations. Proposals, and probably external expertise, are invited to begin to resolve this urgent issue.

#### 11. Summary of Action Points

- **Pauline** to add our Social Media Policy to the suite of policies, and, with Eilidh, ensure all staff (volunteers and employees) are made aware of our expectations.
- **Allan** to circulate the draft for a Fundraising Officer to selected individuals.
- **Pete** to investigate the viability of setting up an interest-bearing bank account and of appealing our rating revaluation.
- **Everyone** to propose potential speakers for the forthcoming winter season.
- **'Ever Greener'** group to finalise the initial review of the Museum's current and possible future activities with respect to environmental sustainability, and then circulate for feedback.
- **Guy**, with input from Eilidh and Babs, will continue to review our Risk Assessments.

#### 12. Dates of next meetings

The next full Board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 31 July at 4.30pm; the Executive Group will meet on 16 July.

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 5.40pm.