



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

8 May 2024

Gairloch Museum. 4.30pm.

Present Allan Templeton; Corinna Annetts; Pauline Butler; Jeremy Fenton; Peter Lynn; Irene Macintyre; Roy Macintyre; Gordon McIntosh; Anne MacLennan; Jean Ross; Guy Seaman; Eilidh Smith; Ben Thomas.

Apologies Anna MacQuarrie; Scott Steedman.

1. Conflicts of Interest

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

2. Minutes of the Board meeting of 6 March

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 March were agreed to be a correct record, proposed by Corinna and seconded by Eilidh. Matters arising:

- i) It has been decided that the Visitor Evaluation Project proposal was not suited to our needs and purposes so we have declined the offer to participate.
- ii) We have implemented the revised rates of pay for employees whose review date is 1 April.
- iii) Eilidh and Babs led the mandatory pre-season training session. This has been repeated with UHI staff. Others who were not able to attend will have individual training as possible.

3. Recommendations of the Executive Group

The Executive Group met on 2 April. Notes from the meeting have been circulated to inform of progress on action points. Allan emphasised that financial sustainability, in particular increasing visitor footfall and spend, is and must be our overriding priority this season.

- i) To date, there have been two meetings of the Business Planning group looking at how the Museum becomes more sustainable over the next 5 years. Gordon gave a verbal report and proposed holding a focus session for all Board members to develop what is and is not feasible. Allan and Gordon will meet to discuss the way forward.
- ii) Our *Fair Work First* commitment is on the website. MGS have confirmed that it meets the requirements for recipients of their grants - to pay at least the Real Living Wage and ensure there are channels for employee voice.
- iii) The draft Company Risk Register, prepared by Pauline and Ben, will be comprehensively reviewed in the autumn. With respect to the highest 'risks' initially identified: we have not yet been able to fill our vacant cleaner post; the concrete dust risk has been mitigated by resealing the Office floor (thanks given to all who helped), with the Activity Room next on the list; Eilidh is working on guidance for Museum staff (employees and volunteers) with respect to posting commentary on social media; and ways forward are being considered for managing wider access to the Museum network/Sharepoint and the use of personal email addresses in Museum-related correspondence.
- iv) The final versions of the review of our 2023-2024 Action Plan and the consequent Plan for 2024-2025 are in the Board Folder online. After three years of updating and cross-referencing, the paperwork has become very extensive and Pauline recommended a 'start from scratch' approach, with new coordinator, at the end of this year as the next three-year Forward Plan is prepared. Given his recent experience, Ben offered his assistance.
- v) The 2024 AGM is scheduled for 28 October. Two potential speakers are being approached but further suggestions for this date, or other talks for our winter programme, would be welcomed.

4. Financial report

Pete's report on our income and expenditure breakdown to the end of April has been circulated. He explained the revised format he is using for this year's presentation of figures. Some improvement over the comparable period in 2022 is evident, but he cautioned that it is early days as yet, and so much is dependent on the weather. That we continue to be successful in securing grants gives a welcome boost to the bottom line.

He continues to await responses from SSEN to various enquiries related to our electricity supply and the potential to sell back to the grid.

It was noted that the 'pay to donate' and other donation streams have not been very productive so far this year. The current exhibition paintings are, in contrast, selling extremely well.

He has asked our accountants to have the first draft of the 2023 Accounts available by the end of June. Allan and Pauline have contributory information to provide.

5. Curator's report

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

- i) Having not received any applications for the post of Gaelic conversation group convener, despite extending the deadlines, an interesting expression of interest has been received now that, with BnG's agreement, it is being advertised as a 'remote' appointment. This will be followed up.
- ii) A strategy to request donations at the end of a successful research/genealogy enquiry is being introduced. Anne is supporting Dorothy as more requests for information are coming in. Dorothy is enquiring as to whether the Museum will fund the costs (to be ascertained) of purchasing access to the 1921 Census material, which is only currently available online via Findmypast.
- iii) Given further refinement of what we would like to achieve and the finances available, we are going to request support for a 0.8f.t.e. (so four days each week rather than three) Events and Outreach Coordinator in our application to MGS. The deadline is next Wednesday, 15 May.

6. Gaelic development report

Anna's report has been circulated. There has been a reprieve on the proposed immediate cuts to funding for Gaelic development officer posts, with a review before further decisions are to be made.

7. Events and Outreach

i) Sarah has agreed to the request for a placement from Gairloch High School for a student with high level needs to be involved in *Whatever the Weather Wednesdays*. In principle, we would always try to support such placements. More school visits are being prepared, as is the first outreach visit to Strathburn House. Eilidh and Corinna will be available to support the WWW session being run by volunteers on 22 May as Sarah is not able to be there.

ii) The report of the Events Group has been circulated. There was a heartening response to the request for volunteer help with events on the busy week-end of 3/4 May.

8. Exhibitions

The report from the Group's meeting on 17 April has been circulated. The new exhibition has been very well received and one of the 'remote' volunteers is particularly interested to promote it further.

9. Environmental Action Plan

With the guidance of the MHH 'ambassador', Corinna and Anne have prepared a draft Action Plan, outlining what we currently do across a range of environmental aspects and potential activities and changes to improve our sustainability. Pauline will convene a meeting to work through these, in particular to consider how different groups, and staff as individuals, can contribute to making us 'ever greener'.

10. Operational matters

- i) Café: Jean has circulated minutes of two café group meetings which show that the current model of reduced provision with fewer staff is, generally, working well, although there is no cover for sickness and leave so the café has then to be closed. The new team is working well together and the volunteer help is much appreciated.
- ii) Facilities maintenance: Guy reported that issues were being dealt with as they arise. Routine checks are being made to schedule. The suite of Risk Assessments is due for review - any updates should be passed to Pauline so the file copies can be amended.
- iv) Volunteer recruitment and training: The volunteers working remotely on social media/promotion are making a useful contribution. In-house, there are still occasions when it is proving difficult to find cover for the Reception Desk, so further efforts should be made to recruit to this role. The First Aid training for several staff is booked for 20 May.
- v) Marketing: Eilidh's report has been circulated. A visit to Ullapool to find out more about access to the cruise ship tourist trade is still planned but has yet to be arranged. A number of suggestions were made as to venues for the distribution of our leaflets/posters and Eilidh will check out who can do what to help with this.
- vii) Retail: Irene's notes were circulated. It was agreed to order 50 'branded' linen tea-towels, designed by Corinna and Jim, on a trial basis, with a view to ordering more next time should they sell well. A canvas bag is a future possibility.

11. Any Other Business

- i) Pauline is to meet with Rosalyn Goulding, recently appointed as NTS' Curator for the Highlands and Islands, on 10 May at Inverewe. She hopes that this could lead to closer collaboration between our organisations with respect to heritage activity. Corinna is already in contact with the NTS' Community Engagement Officer at Torridon.
- ii) Jim Gledhill, who undertook research on the Material Culture of the Cold War period, has highlighted Gairloch Museum's AAOR building and our developments in two recently-published articles. These will be placed in our archives.
- iii) The Board discussed issues arising from GALE's plans for the Shielling and the evident deep divisions of opinion in the Gairloch community. Board members from Gairloch and the wider communities served by both GALE and the Museum expressed their regret that the issue had got this far, as well as their concern about the detrimental effect this was having on the reputation of the village far and wide. In the past the Museum has benefited from a good working relationship with GALE and would continue to work collaboratively where it was in the Museum's and the community's best interests. The importance of transparent communication was seen as crucial.

12. Summary of Action Points

- **Gordon** will develop ideas on Business Planning/Financial Sustainability for further discussion, possibly in a focus group.
- **Allan** to write the Chairman's Report and **Pauline** to provide the 2023 Events programme and organisational information, both to be included in the Accounts, which have been requested by end June.
- **Pauline** to convene a meeting with Corinna, Anne and anyone else interested to progress our 'Ever Greener' agenda.
- **Risk Assessment reviews** are due. Any amendments arising to be reported to Pauline so necessary updates can be made on the file copies.
- **Eilidh** to review the distribution of leaflets/posters and recruit volunteers to ensure restocking when necessary.

13. Dates of next meetings

The next full Board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 12 June at 4.30pm; the Executive Group will meet on 28 May.

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 6.25pm.