



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

13 December 2023  
Gairloch Museum. 4.30pm.

Present Allan Templeton; Corinna Annetts; Pauline Butler; Jeremy Fenton; Peter Lynn; Irene Macintyre; Roy Macintyre; Anna MacQuarrie (Zoom); Jean Ross; Eilidh Smith; Ben Thomas (Zoom).

Gordon McIntosh was welcomed to the meeting.

Apologies Anne MacLennan; Guy Seaman; Scott Steedman.

1. Conflicts of Interest

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

2. Introduction from Allan, our new Chair

On taking over as Chair of the Board, a role to which he is looking forward, Allan thanked Roy for his 25 years of service as Chairman. On behalf of us all, Allan expressed appreciation of Roy's vision and long-term efforts that have brought about such significant achievements in establishing the 'new' Gairloch Museum in the old Council Roads Depot.

Allan confirmed that Roy, as Vice-chair, will stand in for him if necessary, Jeremy, as Vice-chair, will have particular responsibility for membership and he proposed that Jean be a third Vice-chair with a remit for staff liaison. He also explained his intention to set up an 'executive' group which will have a core of himself, Pauline, Pete and Corinna. Other participants will be invited, depending on the issues arising. This will meet between Board meetings to keep the momentum going.

3. Minutes of the Board meeting of 8 November

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 November were agreed to be a correct record, proposed by Peter and seconded by Jeremy. Matters arising:

- i) The first meeting with paid staff had been held on 22 November.
- ii) With Ally having resigned, we no longer have a 'climate ambassador', nor do we know if we are to remain a pilot museum within the MHH project. Corinna has a call booked for Friday and will try to ascertain how matters are likely to proceed.

4. Financial report

Pete had circulated his report and figures for income and expenditure to the end of November, with projections as to how the finances might look at the end of the year and by the start of next season. It is likely that our unrestricted reserves will be below our target figure by then.

He and Roy explained the implications of becoming a trading company if that becomes necessary. In response to Irene's query, Pete also explained why he has put a notional 'staffing' and operational cost, for information purposes, against the income of both the café and the shop.

As detailed in the notes of the meeting of the Finance Group held on 8 December, (also circulated), our clear priorities for 2024 have to be to reduce our costs, particularly of employees, and increase footfall and income thereby arising. It is recognised that 2023 has been difficult for many businesses owing to the ongoing national economic situation.

5. Curator's report

Corinna's report had been circulated, together with a visual of the Gaelic language signage proposed for the front of the building. A mock-up can be seen in the office. The Board endorsed the design. Grant applications will be made in the New Year to meet the estimated £850 cost.

We are pleased that 2LR has offered to make Alice Mackenzie's Gaelic radio programmes available to the Museum for research and reference.

6. Gaelic development report

Anna's report had been circulated. She had found her visit to Gairloch at the end of November to have been very rewarding, both with Corinna and Rachael at the Museum and her session with the students at the High School. She considered them to be exceptional, promising very valuable links for the future.

The plans for Gaelic development work for 2024 will be incorporated into the draft Action Plan which Pauline is working on. Corinna will provide details as they become known.

7. Events and Outreach

Sarah's report had been circulated. One funding application has already been made to enable the continuation and extension of the current 'wellbeing' project. Further submissions are being prepared. The commitment of a number of regular volunteers to the success of 'Whatever the Weather Wednesdays', both in the Activity Room and the café, was noted and very much appreciated.

8. Organisational matters

- i) Working group remits: Pauline now had agreed/updated remits for the four focus groups currently operating. These will be reviewed early in 2024 by the Board's executive and additional groups may well be established as we plan for the future.
- ii) Health and safety:
  - progress has been made on updating the details of the Emergency Plan, though some information is still awaited.
  - to date, 36 risk assessments have been drafted. They cover Museum locations/rooms, activities and events, and general situations, such as lone working and adverse weather. The expertise of Barbara and Jean, and prompt feedback from several people who had been asked to check details had helped to maintain momentum. Pauline will inform Board members when she has posted the proposed risk assessments into the Board folder for everyone for review and revision, before they are made available more generally, both on paper and the internal network. Eilidh commented on how useful the Activity Room RA had been for the recent Seashell Identification day. Procedures, awareness and training has to be the key focus for 'winter school' this year. Guy is arranging meetings with staff, beginning before Christmas, to address the issues which have arisen through the course of the health and safety reviews. A shopping list is being compiled! Pauline, Jean and Barbara were thanked for all they are doing to ensure our procedures and practices have been comprehensively updated.
- iii) Forward planning: Pauline has now circulated an interim review of the current (2023-2024) Action Plan and requests feedback and comment by 20 December so that she can draft an outline Action Plan for 2024-2025. She will circulate this for further input in January. Much of what is intended is already being worked towards through the Gaelic Development and Wellbeing projects, and Outdoor Museum proposals. The Board endorsed, and expressed its support for, the ways forward being proposed and the framework within which the current Forward Plan is progressing.

9. Exhibitions

Allan had circulated the minutes of the 7 December meeting. There were no matters arising other than to confirm that Corinna will be chairing the meetings from now on, the next one being scheduled for 15 February.

10. Operational matters

- i) Front of House: the Board wished Ally well in his new adventures. We put on record our appreciation of all he has done for the Museum over the past three seasons. He will be missed!
- ii) Quality assurance: Eilidh will summarise and circulate the recommendations from the recent VisitScotland assessment. We recognise it will be a challenge to sustain the 5\* standard. We still need to consider whether the *Green Tourism* and *Taste Our Best* awards merit our consideration.

- iii) Marketing: this is high on Eilidh's January agenda and letters will be sent soon to tour group and Ullapool cruise ship companies. Work is ongoing to design signage for the other side of the road, aiming to encourage passers-by to divert into the Museum carpark.  
Sally alerted us to various tourism-related information being disseminated by HIE. Ben will send through some he has seen which might be of interest with respect to 'active travel' funding, possibly in collaboration with GALE.
- iv) Retail: Irene reported that the lower sales income we have experienced this year is very much in line with the evidence from suppliers she met recently at a trade fair. Generally, less money is being spent on non-essentials, though December is bringing in some welcome shop business. She suggested that the use of the ground floor gallery needs to be reconsidered for next Christmas.
- v) Café: A planning meeting will be held in January to review the operation, budget and seasonality-based, that is feasible for 2024.  
Sally and her High School helpers were thanked for the excellent quality of the food and service at the Volunteers' Lunch held on 8 December.
- vi) Premises: a meeting is to be held on 21 December to address the issues raised by the risk assessment of the multiple uses of the Plant Room. Meetings will be scheduled regularly thereafter to ensure that the re-testing, recording, reporting and responding procedures for H&S functions become embedded in our routine operations.

#### 11. Any Other Business

- i) Jean reported on some issues raised at the 22 November meeting of employed staff:
  - given that it is good for morale and efficiency if all employees are at the meeting, the Finance Group needs to decide whether attendance on an equitable basis can best be achieved by paying for 'additional hours' or giving time in lieu for those attending in their own time.
  - many of the points made reinforced the findings of the H&S/risk assessment review processes currently underway which are being addressed, either by change of practice or through awareness-raising and training planned. The next meeting is scheduled for 10 January.
- ii) Pauline noted that there seem to be few opportunities nowadays for volunteers and employees, other than curators/managers, to meet with colleagues in similar roles across Highland. In the past, she and others benefitted from sessions at (for example) Culloden and Historylinks at Dornoch. We recognise that the pandemic brought about a hiatus and that Museums and Heritage Highlands are a different organisation from the Highland Museums Forum under the aegis of Highland Council's Museums Officer. As he is a member of their board, Ben said he could raise the matter at a future meeting of MHH. Pauline will send him an email to request this.
- iii) An estate manager from the Royal Horticultural Society is interested to visit us to find out more about the conversion of our AAOR building as they have a similar World War II 'bunker' and are looking for ideas. A date has still to be arranged but Pauline and Roy will try to be available.
- iv) Following the 17 November meeting of volunteers, Pete, Corinna and Eilidh have met to consider how best to respond to, and, in some instances, implement suggestions that have been made.
- v) The Board acknowledges with gratitude Rachael's excellent contribution as our interim curator for much of the year. She has ensured ongoing collection development, rewritten all policies, undertaken the transfer to Axiell Cloud, contributed to social media and created our Smartify presence, as well as dealing very effectively, as part of the team, with day-to-day matters arising.

#### 12. Date of next meeting

The next full Board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 31 January at 4.30; the Executive Group will meet on 18 January.

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 5.45pm - followed by welcome seasonal refreshments.