

Curator's Report

Acquisitions

- Framed photograph of the former Bank of Scotland building in Aultbea.
- Research paper on the history of Aird Farm, Badachro (added to by Dorothy).
- Sofie has cleaned and treated the Bookshop sign.
- Dollol photographs appraisal ongoing; Irene is adding names to identify individuals.
- Roy Wentworth folder on archaeology scanned and added to the archive (sent to Neil Davidson for research into drystone walling around Gairloch).
- We were offered a donation of a church organ, from a house in Laide (see acquisition proposal attached).

Gaelic

A two-hour Gaelic training session was delivered by Bria for staff and volunteers. The session was well attended and positively received. It covered Gaelic in our collections, the history of Gaelic and the Gàidhealtachd, and included a practical language session on welcoming visitors to the museum.

Grants

Historic Environment Scotland (HES)

No further update received.

Following a meeting with the Craft Fellow coordinator, I was advised that HES prefer the grants and Craft Fellow programmes to be separate, as combining them is considered double funding. I was asked to revise and resubmit the application without Craft Fellow involvement. The revised application was submitted on 5 February and we are awaiting a decision.

National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF)

Application unsuccessful due to high competition and not evidencing a strong enough 'need' case.

Two follow-up meetings have taken place. We were strongly encouraged to re-submit as a match-funding bid for the MGS Innovation Fund (see below) and to reduce the request to £100k.

Museums Galleries Scotland (MGS) Innovation Fund

An Expression of Interest meeting was held and we were invited to apply (16 February). An application for £81k has been submitted.

ESGA – 'Whatever the Weather'

Application unsuccessful, which puts the programme at risk.

For the past four years, grant funding has secured our dementia-friendly and inclusive programme, warm winter lunches, schools provision, and the Wellbeing Coordinator post. Losing this funding is not an option.

Further applications have been submitted to:

Hugh Fraser Foundation (decision end of March)
Celtman (no published decision dates)
Ward Discretionary Fund (decision end of March)

A further request has also been made to GAMS.

Together, these would cover £8.5k to allow the programme to run for six months while we secure a larger funding pot.

Socants

Application successful. Funding will allow micromorphology and radiocarbon dating for the previous Achtercairn digs, as well as small finds drawings. DSRs will be written up this year; final excavation reports to be completed by Tom by the end of April 2027.

Roundhouse

Planning permission has been granted.

Conditions include:

- Biodiversity improvements (e.g. bird or bat boxes)
- Plaster-paved dropped kerb
- Work start notification within three years

Meetings have been held with VisitScotland and the Caithness Broch Project to strengthen sector links. Caithness are happy to undertake joint marketing and assist during the build phase.

A Roundhouse SMART group visit was hosted with students from the High School, together with Sarah. Activities included sessions on roundhouses, archaeology, and the Poolewe Hoard.

Displays

New displays for the gold fob watch and Duncan Mackenzie bard objects have been installed upstairs.

A big thank you to Jean, Anne, Sofie and Fran, who completed the annual spring clean over two days.