



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

8 December 2021
Gairloch Museum. 4.30pm.

Present (In person) Roy Macintyre; Karen Buchanan; Pauline Butler; Peter Lynn; Irene Macintyre; Jean Ross; Guy Seaman; Eilidh Smith; Allan Templeton.
(Zoom) Liz Forrest; Nevis Hulme; Barbara Mackenzie; Anne MacLennan; Mark Macleod; Ben Thomas.

Apologies Scott Steadman.

1. Conflicts of Interest

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

2. Minutes of the Board meeting of 20 October

The minutes of the meeting on 20 October were agreed to be a correct record, proposed by Jean and seconded by Allan. Matters arising:

- i) In recent weeks, a range of induction sessions has been held for Board members which has generated ideas and helped new Board members understand the organisation better.
- ii) A VisitScotland grant scheme to keep visitor attractions open through the winter was checked out but was not suitable for our business.

3. Financial report

Roy has circulated a summary of the current financial situation. He reported that the bank balance continues to show a healthy credit. A group has now been set up to support Roy with financial matters. Pauline requested that the group establish a clear remit. Its first task will be to recommend revised entrance and membership fees for 2022. These were last increased in 2019.

4. Curator's Report

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

Matters arising:

- i) The Gaelic Bibles which have been deaccessioned are: LIB81; LIB209; LIB233; LIBV80a; LIB80B; LIB270; LIB39; LIB277; LIB378; LIB703; OBJ1274; LIB394; LIB151; LIB266; LIB376.
- ii) Roy has designed a plinth for the Chapel of Sand which he will discuss with Jean and Anne before it is sent to Tom Gardner of HES for his consideration.
- iii) Karen requested a decision as to how much of the two donations recently received from private trusts should be passed directly and immediately to Museums Heritage Highlands for the *Highland Stories* project. MHH is working on an application to MGS for support funding towards participation in Scotland's *Year of Stories 2022*. As yet the projected costs for the touring exhibition, which is to be launched at Gairloch Museum in September 2022 and eventually be installed in the new museum planned as part of the Inverness Castle

redevelopment, have not been finalised. There are other potential grants for which applications might be made.

A wide-ranging discussion ensued as to the definition of 'restricted funds', and how much remained of the Art Fund prize money, having committed £20K of it to the Outdoors Museum work. Is it intended that the funds remaining would be used to support outreach and curatorial developments, as had been indicated originally? She stressed that there is a need to plan how to finance the management and delivery of events, activities and outreach as part of our core budgeting in the longer term, notwithstanding the just-submitted application for project funding to support a programme working with those in our community who face significant challenges.

It was agreed that, in the light of our current understanding of the MHH project, we are likely to commit £25K in the first instance when we have received and considered the proposed budget.

5. Events & Outreach

i) Mark provided an overview of the talks, workshops and other engagements (such as the community archaeology dig) organised through 2021 with figures on attendance and income (through both donations and fees). This will inform his analysis and conclusions as his year-long freelance post draws to a close. Board members will be circulated with a draft copy. The evidence does not suggest that the modest fees for some events discouraged people from signing on, and often there was a supplementary donation. Even for online-only speakers there are associated costs, not to speak of the 'time costs' of employed staff.

Most talks are recorded and, after editing, are put on the Museum's YouTube channel, so are then available to the public for free. Though it is not possible to quantify, it is very possible that those who engage with us online will be future visitors, potential donors or members, or spread the word about us. Also, if we can attract more views on YouTube there could be income from advertising.

It was mooted that we should seek to attract business sponsorship to support the costs of events, activities and exhibitions. Ben suggested investigating if Arts & Business Scotland might be a source of help for this purpose.

ii) Mark has agreed to take on a revised short-term contract for January-March 2022, continuing as a freelance consultant. This will maintain the momentum of planning for 2022 events and activities, and allow more time to recruit for the broader events and outreach post which we decided not to progress in November whilst we await the outcome of the application to the Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund.

iii) A one-off pub quiz is planned at Gairloch Hotel, probably in February. Allan would welcome helpers!

iv) A proposal to issue all students in local schools with a free pass to encourage them to visit and bring their family (as members or paying entrance fees) will be explored further.

6. Exhibitions

Allan outlined the programme for the first exhibitions of 2022, which begins with a family-friendly exhibition with activities by Gabi Paterson (Scottish birds—expressive paintings) in the upstairs gallery and photographs from the competition marking the 70th anniversary of Beinn Eighe National Nature Reserve downstairs. This will be followed by *Global Shorelines* which will link with other local natural history exhibitions and/or eco-project initiatives, possibly in the ATC Hall.

7. Operational matters

i) Front of House: Eilidh had circulated the proposed winter break and spring opening schedule, which all accepted. Tourists are now scarce.

- ii) Marketing: advantage will be taken of the winter break to review and revise our promotional materials.
The recent VisitScotland assessment which resulted in a high 4* grading will be scrutinised to see what can be addressed immediately, what worked on in the longer term and what is not realistic or desirable. Roy will undertake a costing exercise on increasing the paving which might reduce the drainage and pothole issues which lost us marks, though he can't stop the rain!
- iii) Retail: little to report other than the arrival of new books.
- iv) Café: notes from the last meeting of the Café group (21.10.21) had been circulated. At its next meeting, the group will review the Job Profile and recruitment requirements for a deputy café manager and other staffing and pricing issues. Recommendations and comments from the VisitScotland Report will also be addressed. Roy assured the meeting that gratuities which are included in a card payment are checked and distributed appropriately.
The Environmental Health Officer had made two recommendations following a recent visit and these will be costed.
A local food outlet is interested to use our premises on an occasional basis for 'pop-up' suppers. A fee proposal has been prepared.

8. Date of next meeting

There being no other business, the date for the next Board meeting is Wednesday 26 January 2022 at 4.30pm.

The meeting ended at 6.25pm.