



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

10 September 2025
Gairloch Museum. 4.30pm.

Present Allan Templeton; Corinna Annetts; Pauline Butler; Liz Forrest; Irene Macintyre; Roy Macintyre; Barbara Mackenzie; Anne MacLennan; Jean Ross; Alastair Stephen; Eilidh Smith (Zoom).
Apologies Peter Lynn; Gordon McIntosh; Guy Seaman; Scott Steedman; Ben Thomas.

Alastair was welcomed as a newly co-opted member to the Board meeting.

1. Conflicts of Interest
No potential conflict of interest was declared with respect to the Agenda.
2. Minutes of the Board meeting of 8 July
The minutes of the meeting held on 8 July were agreed to be a correct record, proposed by Liz and seconded by Anne. Matters arising:
 - i) Currently, cardboard waste is being managed by individual effort. Pete will update in due course.
 - ii) Some acoustic panels have now been installed in the Activity Room. The *Whatever the Weather* group users report that there is a marked improvement, even before completion of the work.
3. Report of the Executive Group
The Executive Group met on 29 July. Notes from the meeting have been circulated to inform of progress on action points.
4. Financial report
Pete's monitoring reports on our budget forecast and trading in 2025 to date have been circulated. In line with other indoor heritage attractions, our summer footfall has not met expectations, owing, we are sure, to the generally good weather. Our highest income ever was on the day of Storm Floris! Retail sales have held their own though, and the Café has been extremely successful. The final draft of our 2024 Accounts has been received, implementing the various corrections and clarifications proposed, so the reporting deadlines will be met without undue concern this year.
5. Financial Strategy Group
Minutes of the meeting of 9 July have been circulated. A further meeting was held on 3 September. Helen Smith of Rowan Tree Consulting in Strathpeffer has taken on the role of marketing officer with effect from mid-September. Eilidh has already had a very useful meeting with Helen.
6. Curator's report
Corinna's report has been circulated. It covered: Grant applications; Displays Development; Collections; Documentation; Roundhouse Progress Update; Other points.
Further to this:
 - i) The application to HES to support the Roundhouse project was complex and required many supporting documents. It has now been submitted. She thanked Ben and Pauline for their supportive contributions.
Following wide-ranging discussions and consultations, ARC have now submitted the Planning documents for the Roundhouse reconstruction on our behalf.

- ii) Sarah has undertaken most of the work for the submission to ESGA (Age Scotland) to continue our *Whatever the Weather* community programme. This will cover all related costs, if successful.
- iii) Discussions with Stuart Letford, with respect to recognising the contribution of Iain Dall to the local heritage of piping, have resulted in a plan to include a recording of Stuart playing one of the Blind Piper's songs in the Gaelic listening post. Further to this, we will endeavour to secure his chanter on loan from NMS, perhaps for the longer-term. Anna MacQuarrie, until recently our Gaelic Development Officer, is supporting our request. The Board endorsed these display developments.
- iv) After discussion, the Board's recommendation is that we do not accept the Allen scythe that has been offered for our Collection on the grounds that: a) it isn't of local provenance; b) that Allen scythes, though not unknown, were not in general use in the area; c) that there isn't space inside the Museum in the crofting section; d) we don't have farming implements as a display theme in the Outdoor Museum; and e) that it would rapidly rust outside unless we built a shelter for it. It was suggested that the donor be advised to offer the equipment to the Highland Folk Museum.
- v) All Board members are very supportive of the plan to apply for significant funding for a 4-year Community Archaeology research project (excavation and reporting). However, given the context of the work load implications arising from, and likely schedule of implementation if successful of, the significant submissions already made for the reconstruction Roundhouse, it was agreed that we should first establish a basis for the project proposed by ensuring that the findings of the roundhouse excavations already undertaken are finalised and compiled into a report. This will also require a funding application, but of a more manageable scale.
- v) A final (English) version of a new Memorandum of Understanding with Sabhal Mòr Ostaig has been circulated. The Board ratified this, with the expectation that SMO will prepare a Gaelic translation. The MoU will be signed on a visit next week.

7. Annual General Meeting 2025

Arrangements are in hand for the AGM, to be held in the Gairloch Community Hall at 7pm on Monday, 27 October. The talk, on the Stone of Destiny, will be given by Prof. Sally Foster of Stirling University. *Am Bàrd* staff have offered to prepare the refreshments.

We have one vacancy for an elected director; the three current members who stand down on the constitutional rotation (but eligible for re-election) are Jean, Guy and Ben.

8. Events and Outreach

Ell's updated record of events recently undertaken and planned from September to December was circulated. There is a strong and diverse programme.

A Memorandum of Understanding for future collaboration with the Highlife Highland Ranger Service has been agreed. Katie Grant is already working closely with the Museum on joint events (including a well-supported Londubh Burial Ground walk), education and learning, 'Ever Greener' and Roundhouse project aspects.

9. Exhibitions

Notes from the most recent EPG meeting, 29 July, have been circulated. The exhibition by the Royal Scottish Society of Painters in Watercolour attracted many visitors from further afield. The just-opened exhibitions by two local artists have also already aroused considerable interest. They will remain on display until December. Eilidh highlighted that the organisation, time and effort required of both employed and volunteer staff to mount and dismount exhibitions should not be under-estimated. Planning is underway to secure a 'masterpiece loan' in 2028. The management of this would be ambitious and would need funding support/dedicated staffing.

10. 'Ever Greener' task force

The notes of the meeting of 12 August have been circulated. A committed squad of volunteers is now regularly maintaining the grounds in general and the Archaeology Trail in particular. The group is planning to plant more trees for biodiversity and to create plant displays to complement the

Roundhouse project. Contact will be made with the High School to see if there is any scope to involve a Duke of Edinburgh scheme participant in Ever Greener activities.

After discussions with the contractors installing the solar panels at the Community Hall, Allan is keen to research the possibilities of battery storage and/or heat pumps at the Museum, particularly to reduce the heating costs of the Activity Room. He will explore potential contacts for further advice.

11. Operational matters

- i) Front of House & Retail: Eilidh has provided an update report on recent business. The front desk rota continues to be very stretched, but there may be two more recruits soon.
- ii) Café: After discussion, it was agreed that, in accordance with the recommendations following trialling, £7,300 of our reserves should be committed immediately to replacing all the Café chairs as the current furniture continues to deteriorate. If some of the cost can be recouped by targeted events, such as the bingo session offered by the Café staff, that would be helpful.
Jean reported that advertising had failed to attract part-time staff to enable Saturday opening, so the Café would continue to open primarily Monday-Friday. However, *Am Bàrd* staff will work on the Open Doors Day (20 September) and consider the possibility of some Saturday opening during the winter season, as well as occasional bookable opportunities to support the Events programme.
- iii) Facilities and Health & Safety: Guy had provided a summary list of current issues and Barbara circulated an update of the record that is held at the Museum. This includes defective lighting (often recurring, despite having been 'fixed'), check needed on gas ventilation, overdue T-testing of panel, and solar panel live screen fault. There is frustration at the time it takes to deal with those faults that cannot easily be dealt with from within our own resources. The Executive Group will, at its next meeting, review the current processes of dealing with maintenance and Health and Safety issues and try to establish a resilient structure to resolve them more expeditiously.
Roy reported that he had had a constructive meeting last week with Simpson's new project manager who accepted their responsibility to undertake the long-awaited, necessary repairs to the external render, windows and fire doors. It is hoped that this work will soon be progressed.

12. Any Other Business

- i) Roy submitted an application to Highland Council for advertising consent for the proposed Geological Timeline, to be informed that he must resubmit some papers, using OS maps. He has identified some help with sourcing these.
- ii) The end-of-season volunteer feedback session to take place on 4 November, and the Volunteers' lunch on 9 December. The budget and menu for this will be agreed with *Am Bàrd* staff.
- iii) Allan encouraged everyone to support the talk on Antarctica, scheduled for this Friday, which he highly recommended.

13. Summary of Action Points

- **Pete** to update on cardboard recycling.
- **Corinna** to progress the plan to display the Iain Dall chanter on loan from NMS.
- **Corinna** to explore funding options for reporting on the recent archaeology excavations.
- **MoUs** to be finalised with Sabhal Mòr Ostaig and Highlife Highland Ranger Service.
- **Pauline** to explore possibilities of DoE student(s) working with the Ever Greener Group.
- **Allan** to seek expertise to advise on progressing battery storage/heat pump installation.
- **Eilidh** to order 50 chairs for *Am Bàrd*.
- **Executive Group** to review current procedures for dealing with maintenance issues with a view to resolving defects and actioning routine checks more expeditiously.

14. Dates of next meetings

The next Executive meeting will take place on Tuesday, 30 September (tbc).

The next full Board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, 12 November at 4.30pm.

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 6.10 pm.