



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

20 October 2021
Gairloch Museum. 4.30pm.

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

Apologies Jeremy Fenton; Guy Seaman.

1. Conflicts of Interest

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

2. Minutes of the (Zoom) Board meeting of 25 August

The minutes of the meeting on 25 August were agreed to be a correct record, proposed by Allan and seconded by Nevis. Matter arising:

In their A.O.B. comments at the AGM, two members had repeated their request to revert to donations being invited, rather than admission fees, for attendance at lectures.

3. Company Governance

- i) Pauline had circulated a report about the AGM proceedings, including the text of the letter sent to OSCAR, explaining the circumstances which had meant that those members wanting to participate online had not been able so to do at the time, though each was sent an email the next day. This included points raised during the meeting and invited responses to the items on the Agenda. One member, over a prolonged correspondence, did not accept that the AGM could be considered to have been quorate and questioned whether our Articles of Association allowed us to conduct AGM business online. His views were included in the letter to OSCAR. In its reply, OSCAR noted the contents of our letter, which will be kept on file, but did not require a re-run of the AGM nor suggest that we should change our Articles (specifically no. 65). The Board agreed that the letter to OSCAR need not be put into the public domain.
- ii) In accordance with Articles 36 & 54, officers of the Company were duly nominated, seconded and appointed: Chairman: Roy Macintyre; Vice chairmen: Jeremy Fenton and Allan Templeton; Secretary: Pauline Butler. There were no nominations for the post of Treasurer so the current arrangements will continue, though every effort should continue to be made to find someone willing and able.
- iii) Having reviewed and extended what is already available, Pauline will resend the folder link to all Board members so that everyone has access to a suite of documents for information and guidance. Sessions which any Board member can attend will be arranged before Christmas.

Those currently planned are: the Museum as a heritage and visitor resource (Karen & Eilidh); finance and business operations (Roy & Irene); and governance and the 'new Museum' projects (Pauline).

- iv) Scott Steadman and Peter Lynn have indicated their interest in being involved in Museum governance. They will be invited to attend meetings and to participate in the sessions being planned for Board members.

4. Financial report

- i) Roy reported that the bank balance continues to show a healthy credit. Both admissions and retail income remain close to our projected figures and October has seen higher visitor footfall than expected.
- ii) Roy invited questions on the details of the P&L statement. It was noted that extraordinary payments, such as for the Outdoors Museum project work, repayment of loans and paying artists for their exhibition sales, have distorted some months' figures but, trading-wise, we anticipate having made sufficient 'profit' through the busy summer months to carry the winter period. We will investigate the potential of a grant application to be made to VisitScotland to keep visitor attractions open through the winter.
- iii) Whether or not GDHC should set up a separate trading company remains a finely-balanced decision. Roy outlined some of the considerations. We hope to be clearer as to the best way forward once this year's trading income and expenditure has been analysed, though it has been anything but 'normal'.

5. Curator's Report

- i) Karen's report has been circulated. It covered Building and grounds; Collections; Interpretation and displays; Education and training; Projects; the Chapel of Sand, Udrigle, meeting.
Matters arising:
 - Mark will send Karen information about the offer from the National Gallery of touring exhibitions for regional museums which Ben had heard about
 - Roy will design a stone plinth for the information board proposed for the Chapel of Sand, and quotes will be obtained. We wish to avoid the likely time delays and expense which would arise from any 'deep excavation'
 - the details required to resurrect the Royal Bank of Scotland account for the Chapel of Sand monies are proving very tiresome!
- ii) Issues arising from Karen's comprehensive discussion paper on *Collections Development: Acquisition and Disposal* included:
 - our oral history collection and other such 'intangible culture' was part of the archive, rather than the object, collection
 - the extensive body of documentation related to the 'new Museum' project should be organised within the archives
 - consideration would be given to 'Gairloch memorabilia' being identified as a collecting area for development.Any further thoughts should be shared with Karen by the end of the month.
- iii) The Collection objects that were deaccessioned on chair's action were:
 - OBJ1091.1-3 door latch: poor condition and no historic value
 - OBJ1440 crank handle: poor condition and no provenance
 - OBJ739 three rusty nails: very poor condition and no provenance
 - OBJ1085 cas chrom foot: very poor condition, duplicate, no provenance
 - OBJ1184 milk strainer: rusty and unstable
 - OBJ1602 stove vent: fragment and of little historic value
 - OBJ1078; OBJ1079; OBJ1080: 3 gin traps: each in poor condition and duplicate.

6. Events & Outreach

- i) Mark reported that there have been 30 events in the 42 weeks of 2021 to date, with a very concentrated period of late, given the Shiant Islands-related programme, Highland Archaeology Festival and Maths Week Scotland. He is analysing the data of attendances, income (both fees and donations) and audience responses and will be writing a report to inform the Board as it looks ahead, developing from the platform of this year's wide range of activities.

In the days remaining of his contract he will be creating more digital content, and editing talks for online access, such as Alison Sheridan's AGM lecture. There are some volunteers interested to help with digital work, and also the potential of a group from Gairloch High School involved as part of a Foundation Apprenticeship in Creative and Digital Media. There is an extensive and increasing legacy of events through our Gairloch YouTube offer, including presentations (e.g. the Gille Dubh) and most talks. This provides a hook for future audiences, members and visitors, with the potential of additional income generation. The Board concurred whole-heartedly with Roy's endorsement of the great impact and benefit that has come through Mark's engagement with Gairloch Museum.

- ii) It was agreed that, once Mark's contract ends, we should commit to continuing with an ambitious and broad events and activities programme. We recognise that this will require a dedicated member of staff (part-time) to work with Karen and Eilidh.

7. Student opportunities at the Museum

In principle, the Board supports placements at the Museum under the Scottish Government's *Young Persons Guarantee* Scheme. We have though to be realistic and take into account the demands on staff in the proposed collaboration with Gairloch High School to participate in the Foundation Apprenticeship programme.

8. Exhibitions

The notes of the most recent meeting of the EPG have been circulated. These include the programme planned for the next two years.

The Exhibitions Group had drafted a revised Policy. This has been circulated and was endorsed by the Board. The related and updated *Guidance for Exhibitors* will be posted on our website.

9. Gaelic in Gairloch Museum (GiGM)

The minutes of the group had been circulated.

Various options for the installation of the 'old' Gaelic sign are being considered, both inside and outside the building. Roy will ascertain progress on its conservation. Our architects will need to be consulted before there is further discussion on the desirability of a second large external sign.

Proposals put forward to develop Gaelic through the displays, including extending the use of QR codes, will be discussed in meetings of the Interpretation Team in the first instance.

Several Board members expressed disappointment with the assertions made in the GiGM minutes. There was no acknowledgement of the panels erected in our café depicting verses from the Gaelic Bards and the group appeared to be unaware of the Museum's long established involvement with Gaelic conversation classes and musical events which were interrupted by Covid. The offer of time and commitment by GIGM group members to re-establish such activities was welcomed. There has also been considerable effort by those working on Reception to engage with visitors about our Gaelic culture and language which seems not to have been recognised. Nevis accepted the offers of Ben, Barbara and Eilidh to join the GiGM group in order to share their various interests and expertise.

Renewal of the *Memorandum of Understanding* with Sabhal Mòr Ostaig is already noted for potential inclusion for the next *5 Year Forward Plan* which we need to finalise over the winter. It

was noted that there are other universities where we might well find staff and students interested to help us develop our Gaelic resources.

10. Operational matters

- i) Front of House: Eilidh reported that there have been several October days when the Museum has been as busy as in the height of summer. It was proposed that Museum and café would open Wednesday-Saturday, 11am-4pm, from November to Christmas.
- ii) Data analysis: the two students from Stirling University have completed their projects. Ben reported that there are some useful recommendations, and that he would extract material for a presentation, some of which might well be of interest to Museums and Heritage Highland. It was felt that the project work would have benefitted from more targeted supervision and follow up checking with Museum staff who could have explained some of the issues raised.
- iii) Marketing: Eilidh had circulated a prioritised list of the actions being worked through. The group meets again next week.
- iv) Retail: Irene reported that the shop continues to attract customers who spend well, as the sales figures indicate.
- v) Café: *Am Bàrd* receives generally very good feedback, though staffing is a challenge, particularly when holidays and sickness coincide. Operational matters will be reviewed shortly; the recruitment of a capable deputy manager is seen as a priority.
- vi) Premises: there are no significant current issues. It is hoped that membership of the intended focus group will be finalised soon.

11. Any Other Business

- i) We very much hope that Jeremy will soon be restored to good health.
- ii) It is intended to invite volunteers and retired Board members to a buffet lunch in November/early December.
- iii) Thought will be given as to the feasibility and arranging of a community Christmas Saturday, as was so successful in 2019. Our elf is willing!

12. Date of next meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 8 December at 4.30pm as a hybrid session.

The meeting ended at 6.30pm.