



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

9 March 2022
Gairloch Museum. 4.30pm.

Present (In person) Roy Macintyre; Karen Buchanan; Pauline Butler; Peter Lynn; Irene Macintyre; Anne MacLennan; Jean Ross.
(Zoom) Jeremy Fenton; Liz Forrest; Barbara Mackenzie; Mark Macleod; Jen Shaw; Eilidh Smith; Scott Steadman; Ben Thomas.

Apologies Guy Seaman; Allan Templeton.

Jen and Scott were welcomed to their first 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 26 January

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 January were agreed to be a correct record, proposed by Guy and seconded by Anne (both by email). There were no matters arising.

3. Financial report

- i) An overview of the early weeks of 2022 trading and the P&L Report for December 2021-5 March 2022 had been circulated. The Museum visitor numbers and spend are below original predictions, though the Café has been busy on occasion. This is the first time we had opened to the public in February and note that local hotels were still closed. We will review February opening for next year. We do, though, recognise that we have a community service role, that we have more permanent staff and that our research facilities are well used all year round, so profitability should not be the only criterion when deciding when to be open. A broader discussion ensued about how we might improve our understanding of the visitor profile (local/tourist/age/purpose of visit). It was agreed that we should improve our data collection (maybe request visitor postcode on arrival?) and reinstitute visitor questionnaires in a structured way through the season, to establish a basis for benchmarking.
- ii) The accounts are ready to go to PNL. We are assured that there is a member of staff covering Lynsay's maternity leave.

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; Miscellaneous.

Matters arising:

- i) Karen requested leave of absence and financial support to attend an online Sabhal Mòr Ostaig course on Gaelic language over Easter. This was agreed.
- ii) She explained further about the Isles of Scilly Museum redevelopment project which includes repurposing an historic building. They had found their visit here to be the most useful of all

those undertaken so far, saw us as a model for their own project and were very impressed with the shop.

- iii) Pauline is keeping the donors of the Finlay Mackinnon album informed as to how we are benefitting from their generosity. They are delighted with what we are doing.

5. Events & Outreach

- i) In his final Report to the Board, Mark explained some of the metrics which he will be including in his end-of-contract evaluation report to the Art Fund, all of which were showing a positive impact from the project. He exemplified the Open Weave project, the community archaeology dig and the Gille Dubh film. There have been 27 hours of talk content across the in-person/online deliveries with a permanent digital legacy via YouTube of almost all of the talks. He will continue to work on editing and producing educational 'shorts' until the end of the month. Mark believes that the structures and systems are well embedded and wished Jen well as she continues and develops the role. He expressed his gratitude for all the support he has received from everyone, staff, volunteers and Board members, particularly Karen and Eilidh. He perceives Gairloch Museum as being "miles ahead" of many others in its events and outreach work.

On behalf of us all, Roy thanked Mark for his tremendous contribution to the Museum's development of events and outreach provision, offering such a diverse range of engagement opportunities.

- ii) Jen Shaw, our new Events & Outreach Coordinator, expressed her gratitude for the welcome she has been given in her first week and the great help Mark has already provided. She is really looking forward to the programme now being planned, which includes family-oriented activities for Easter, such as card-making and 'Marine Eco-life'.
- iii) Bualnaluib School had a very successful day at the Museum recently, learning about aspects of the collection and writing their own object labels.

6. Exhibitions

Global Shorelines has just been installed in the downstairs Gallery. The next group meeting was postponed until 17 March.

7. Operational matters

- i) Front of House: volunteers are meeting for updates and refresher training, and making valuable contributions for improving procedures and practices. There is a focus on issues that were raised by the Visit Scotland, but even more important are the standards we set ourselves.

Eilidh is exploring and costing options for 'Tap and donate' which is currently not available via our EPOS system, so might need to be stand alone. Various Board members gave examples of systems they knew about, all with reservations. Ben will check out studies undertaken by HIE and HES to see if they can be shared to help us decide. It was considered that donations are more likely to be forthcoming if invited for specific, rather than general, Museum purposes. Eilidh will include the costs of installing a 'tap and donate' facility into the submission to MGS' Museums Recovery Fund which is being worked on.

- ii) Quality Assurance: Eilidh, Karen and Sally had discussed issues that were raised by the Visit Scotland 4 not 5* assessment and concluded that the Museum circumstances (particularly staffing challenges to run the Café - a wide-spread problem) might mitigate against us achieving 5* if we go for an early reassessment.

Discussion followed as to how relevant a 5* VisitScotland rating was to our operation, given that our Google rating at 4.9/5 was extraordinarily high for a Museum. It was agreed that we will put in for a reassessment when we feel ready and, once we know the outcome, decide

whether to renew our membership. Ultimately, we want to set our own highest possible standards. This might move us more into the direction of 'net zero' and 'green tourism'

- iii) Marketing: the new flyer is almost ready for printing and circulation, and Jim has already prepared new membership cards.

We have now joined ASVA. Eilidh has a long list of tour operators to follow up, as time permits. Ben offered to help explore the potential of joint marketing with the Wester Ross Biosphere. He and Scott will be invited to the next Marketing Group meeting.

Additional staffing for promotional work is a key element in our current MGS application.

- iv) Retail: the book shelves are full again, following delivery of a huge order, ceramics are on their way and a new line of 'pick and mix' for knitting head bands is to be trialed.
- v) Café: the necessary increase in prices seems to have been accepted by our customers and alcohol is now available with meals. There are new café menus, with information about the bard display panels.

Seasonal staff are being recruited, with an advert in 11 March GDT. A Job Profile is being prepared, ready to advertise for a seasonal deputy café manager to cover Sally's day off and holidays. But we are well aware that there is intense competition locally for hospitality staff. The one-off, pop-up café run by Black Pearl Creole Kitchen received very positive feedback with useful learning points for the Museum and the providers. We recognise that there is some interesting potential for evening use of the Museum, if we have the staffing to support such opening.

- vi) Premises: we await the outcome of our substantial application for investment in solar panels. Roy has a quotation from Simpsons to install pavers in one part of the carpark. He will seek further estimates.

FoH staff need to ensure that fire evacuation and other H&S tests are undertaken routinely, as required, and that they are fully logged. Barbara confirmed that there is a practice building evacuation every 6 months on a Wednesday, when WHC are in the Activities Room, to ensure everyone knows the procedures.

Roy has committed to a 3-year insurance deal with Zurich which offers a substantially reduced premium, year on year.

8. Any Other Business

- i) Before the next Board meeting, Pauline will circulate the 2021-2022 Action Plan to group conveners for review. Although this 'traffic-light' template works well for the various aspects of the Museum's operations, the Board also needs to prepare a post-project, longer-term broader vision and planning, delayed since 2020 because of the challenges of coping with the pandemic. Ben and Jean offered to help frame the new 3/5 year Forward Plan.
- ii) In response to an enquiry from Anne, Roy explained that he was having to submit even further ID details to RBoS before they would restore the Chapel of Sand bank account. Plinth issues are also still to be resolved.
- iii) It was agreed we should hold our next AGM late September or early October, by which time we would have final 2021 Accounts available. A date will be proposed at our next Board meeting.
- iv) The recent Quiz at the Gairloch Hotel had been extremely well-attended and raised almost £1K for Museum funds. Allan has pencilled in end November for the next one.

9. Date of next meeting

The date for the next Board meeting is Wednesday, 27 April 2022 at 4.30pm.

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 5.55pm.