

Curator's Report 17th February 2020

Building and Grounds

There has been no word yet from Fraser Mackenzie about the doorbell but in a few weeks we will no longer need it anyway. I ordered and installed a mail box outside the front door.

I have contacted Gordon Simpson about snagging issues as yet unresolved including the dusty floors and leaking balcony door.

I would like to stress the importance of not interfering with any of the heating thermostats in the display areas without speaking to me first. I am working hard to maintain the environmental conditions that are required for loan objects.

Administration

Following advice from Stuart Caddell, I have taken out an Office 365 subscription at a much-reduced cost for charities. I have not yet had time to set this up properly but will hopefully find time to do so soon. Once set up, it should be easier to share files.

For a number of reasons, it is now imperative that our website and leaflet be prepared ASAP. In the absence of anyone else taking responsibility for this, I will need to make these a priority.

We are due to have a quality assurance visit from Visit Scotland at any moment. Although the museum displays are a key part of our offering, they are not the main focus of the Visit Scotland assessment. I would like to hand this over to the Front of House team.

Collections

No progress has been made on moving the several large objects from the old museum to the new one. Once the good weather is here we really need to get on with this.

Something of an accessions backlog has accumulated in the object collection since we moved and clearing this is now a priority for me. There is still a massive accessions backlog in the archive and very little chance of this being resolved unless I am able to dedicate more time to collections work in the future.

The library needs to be audited and documentation updated on Adlib. There is also a need to appraise the library collection to remove duplicates. In particular, we have a lot of Gaelic bibles, some of which it would be advisable to dispose of.

With the agreement of the Chairman I have disposed of the following objects: OBJ1063 and OBJ1282.

Interpretation and Displays

Additional track lighting has been installed in the Natural World and Walk Through Time galleries. It has made a big difference, particularly to the geology display. Unfortunately, some of the additional lighting on the ground floor was installed in the wrong place and I am trying to address the impact of this on the display objects.

Education and Training

I have completed modules in Prehistory of the Highlands and Islands (77%) and Traditional Gaelic Culture (85%). This semester I am taking one further module – Nationalism and National Identity.

Funding

Reports to funders have all been submitted, including Bord na Gaidhlig, who asked us to return the £1000 they gave us as we did not complete the Gaelic handling box project. This is something I hope we can reapply for in the future.

Miscellaneous

We have received a letter from MGS about our next Accreditation submission with the following date information:

Invitation for Accreditation return: 4th August 2020

Deadline for Accreditation submission to MGS: 25th February 2021

Proposed Accreditation panel meeting: June 2021

I have circulated by email information about Highland Museums' Day and it would be great if some Trustees could come to that event on Thursday 12th March in Alness.

We have submitted an application to Art Fund Museum of the Year 2020 and have received a confirmation of receipt, with the following information about the next steps:

- Applications are initially assessed by an Art Fund panel before being presented to the judges who will decide the shortlist. We will inform you whether or not you have been shortlisted by 13 March.
- Representatives from Art Fund will seek to visit the shortlisted museums at the end of March/early April to discuss how to maximise the opportunities that are presented by the prize. We will be in touch with the shortlisted museums to make these arrangements, but we encourage all entrants to draw this timeframe to the attention of their senior marketing and communications colleagues, as well as any other key colleagues who will be involved during the prize journey with whom we'd like to meet with on the day.
- Each finalist museum will be visited by the judges for a half-day during June. We will liaise with shortlisted museums to confirm this date.

Karen Buchanan (Curator)