



MINUTES OF THE (ZOOM) MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GAIRLOCH & DISTRICT HERITAGE COMPANY LTD

4 August 2020
Gairloch Museum. 3 pm.

Present Roy Macintyre; Karen Buchanan; Pauline Butler; Jeremy Fenton; Liz Forrest; Nevis Hulme; Irene Macintyre; Anne MacLennan; Allan Templeton.

Apologies Stuart Caddell; Susan Maclean; Willie Macrae; Marcus Simpson.

Anne was welcomed to her first Board meeting, following her election as a Director at the AGM.

1. Conflicts of Interest

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

2. Election of Officers of the Company

- i) In accordance with Articles 36 & 54, officers were duly nominated, seconded and appointed: Chairman: Roy Macintyre; Vice chairman: Jeremy Fenton; Secretary: Pauline Butler.
- ii) Now that Dugald has resigned, after holding the fort for so much longer than he intended, and with no volunteer coming forward to take on the duties of Treasurer, Roy's proposal that David Rae take on the administration of our company finances, for an annual fee, was seconded by Allan and Liz, and agreed by all. Dugald will support him during a handover period. David will provide information for each Board meeting and deal with enquiries relating to expenditure and income for funding applications. In the short term, Roy will present David's financial reports to the Board. The situation will be reviewed in a year's time. The Board wishes to put on record our gratitude for Dugald's commitment and wise judgement throughout the challenging five years he served as our Treasurer.
- iii) It was agreed that Jean Ross be co-opted as a Board member, and that Ben Thomas be invited to attend Board meetings whenever he is able.

3. Minutes of the (correspondence) Board meeting of 23 March and Reports to the Board of 27 May & 27 July

The minutes of the 23 March meeting were agreed to be a correct record, proposed by Allan and seconded by Irene. The Report of 27 May, circulated to all Board members, was accepted as a true record of the prevailing situation, as was the Chairman's 18 June update for the AGM, with further input from Pauline as of 27 July.

Matters arising:

- i) We still await responses to the applications Pauline has made for grants towards the 'outdoors museum' project.
- ii) We have been successful in our request to the Heritage Emergency Fund (NLHF) for £9,900 towards the Covid-19-related costs of reopening, including implementation of necessary

safeguarding requirements, and to employ staff for additional hours to support visitor management and volunteers on duty.

- iii) In the circumstances, implementation of the Reserves policy has had to be suspended.
- iv) Planning consent has been granted by Highland Council for the external works.
- v) The 2020 AGM planned for 6 April had to be postponed owing to Covid-19 lockdown. In order to hold the AGM within the time period allowed under our Articles of Association, Pauline managed a 'correspondence' AGM, which closed on 14 July, and was 'attended' by 99 people. She has circulated some of the overwhelmingly positive comments made by participants and was thanked for her efforts.
- vi) The new membership procedures appear to be working well and numbers have held up. Most renewals and new joiners are using the online system, some prefer paper.

5. Financial report

Roy has collated and circulated information with respect to visitor numbers and retail income for the first eight days of opening, (from 22 July), which was quite pleasing, given all the constraints. We have a healthy-looking bank balance at present, but a number of substantial payments are due, including of the final retention payment and towards redemption of our AHF loan. It also includes the grant paid up-front for the archaeology trail development, and the balance of our emergency grant from MGS for operational costs.

It is intended to commit the expenditure to fit out the café soon. We have been fortunate to receive another generous donation towards this from the Ravensdale Trust. So, we must continue to be careful and creative.

6. Curator's Report

Karen presented her Report covering: Building and grounds; Administration; Collections; Interpretation and displays; Education and training; Funding; Miscellaneous.

Further points:

- i) We agreed that it would be of mutual benefit for Karen to take on the role of Accreditation mentor for Applecross Heritage Centre.
- ii) Where best to store the dismantled stable and the wooden roller will be explored with respect both to location and costs.
- iii) The boats must be cleared from the steading site imminently. The coble might be removable, and possibilities are under consideration, but it seems likely that only parts of the other two boats can be salvaged.
- iv) Karen is liaising with Simpsons who have been requested to quote for the relocation of the lighthouse foghorn. This needs to be progressed in the very near future.
- v) Karen would welcome ideas as to the appropriate 'disposal' of the surplus Gaelic bibles in the Library.
- vi) In response to her enquiry, it was agreed that Karen should continue to collate the hours given by Museum volunteers, for inclusion in reports and funding applications where required.

7. Commercial and retail operations

- i) Reports from recent meetings of the COG have been circulated. We await the essential completion and hygiene certificates for the café. Expressions of interest in the post of café manager will be advertised both via social media and GDT.
- ii) Further refinements of the EPOS system are needed to meet our reporting needs and it is hoped these can be undertaken in the near future. There are also issues to resolve with

respect to the card machine. Marcus has implemented the VAT reductions relevant to our operations, for which he was thanked.

- iii) After two weeks of opening Wednesdays-Saturdays, the additional HEF funding enables us to open on Tuesdays also from 4 August. As our available volunteer capacity will now be stretched, given the return to school of some younger helpers, we will use social media to invite new recruits to support reception and room steward duties.
- iv) Allan has circulated the notes of the most recent Exhibitions Planning Group. After discussions with the intended exhibitors, the programme for the upstairs Gallery for the rest of 2020 and all 2021 is complete; arrangements are being finalised for an HES photographic exhibition to be installed in the downstairs exhibition area in mid-August.

8. Any Other Business

- i) The Scottish Civic Trust is scheduled to announce its 'My Place' winners (we know we are on the shortlist) in September and the Art Fund has recently announced that they are changing the format of their Museum of the Year Award, just for this year, to showcase five joint winners, to be made public in October.
- ii) Karen explained the circumstances whereby Marcus had been contacted by our security company in the middle of the night, following the internet failing at the Museum. Usually she responds, having been similarly inconvenienced a number of times, but had not been able to, on this occasion. It was agreed to review the list of keyholders submitted to the alarm signalling company.

9. Date of next meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 23 September 2020 at 4.30 pm. There was some discussion about how best to ensure that all Board members can participate, as 'Zoom' isn't for everyone. A decision as to venue and format will be taken nearer the time.

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 4.40 pm.



REPORT TO THE BOARD OF GAIRLOCH & DISTRICT HERITAGE COMPANY LTD

28 May 2020

Information collated from:

Roy Macintyre; Karen Buchanan; Pauline Butler; Dugald Macpherson; Allan Templeton

1. AGM

No date can be decided on for the 2020 AGM as yet. It now looks unlikely that we will be able to hold it within the 15 months of the previous one (15 April 2019) as our Articles of Association require, but OSCR has reiterated that it will be understanding of any reasonable rearrangements in the circumstances.

2. Financial situation

The final tranche of the HLF grant was received in April and the last payment from the RCGF came from Highland Council in May. So, all 'new Museum' grant payments have now come through and we can stop chasing them.

Having repaid £12K to AHF in April, we intend to repay a further £50k in the near future and AHF are open to discussions in July as to reviewing the schedule to pay the balance. Interest continues to accrue meanwhile.

After detailed income and expenditure analyses, Dugald and Roy prepared a cash flow forecast for May-July which was used to support an application to Museum Galleries Scotland for a Covid-19 Emergency Grant to cover operational costs for that three-month period. We requested, and were granted, £26,200, which should, we believe, be paid into our account quite quickly.

The other big payment due, in July, is the final retention of almost £46K to Simpsons, one year on. An application was made to the Heritage Emergency Fund (HLF are now the National Lottery Heritage Fund - NLHF) for this amount and, in record time, our request was granted in full, to our great relief and gratitude. Pauline is currently finalising the admin required to ensure that payment comes through in due course.

We are putting on record that the support from both MGS and NLHF's officers throughout the processes of applying for emergency funding has been excellent: we could not have hoped for more personal and professional understanding and active help.

To date, financial support from the various government business resilience funds to which Dugald has applied has not been forthcoming, probably because our current bank account 'bottom line' does not look too urgent or precarious. Whether there will still be support available for the tourist sector to help us keep going through until the 2021 season is yet to be seen. We endorsed a letter that came via Visit Wester Ross which was sent to the Scottish Government about the effects on Highland tourism of the long-term shutdown.

3. Staffing

We have taken advantage of the Job Retention Scheme for our permanent staff, with Susan being on furlough since 6 April and Karen since 1 May. This has to be committed to in three week tranches. Once details and likely time-tables for the end of 'lockdown' are made known, it may make sense, and be permissible, to bring staff back part-time in the first instance.

4. Curatorial work

The Museum closed to the public on Thursday 19 March. From then, until she was furloughed, Karen was able to concentrate on collections work, making headway with the accessions backlog. Attention was also given to some new labels and other tweaks to displays and preventive conservation. A good number of boxes sitting since the move has also been processed. Guidance has been given as to the care and conservation of the Collections during the prolonged closure, including the minimum temperature/humidity levels required to meet the insurance conditions for our NMS loan objects. The necessary monitoring is being undertaken.

Museum emails are being checked and relevant information, particularly about the support available to the tourism and museum sector, is circulated as appropriate.

Facebook has been used ongoing to keep our audiences informed and interested and this has been complimented by Kay Jackson of Baxters, who very much enjoyed her visit to see us, just before the doors were closed.

5. Policies, 2020-2021 Action Plan and new 5-Year Forward Plan 2020-2025

Progress on these is, inevitably, stalled in the current circumstances, though they have not been forgotten! MGS Accreditation reassessments have also been suspended for the time being, so there is no immediate urgency.

6. Museum projects: updates and way forward

- i) Planning consent has been secured from Highland Council for the 'outdoors story' proposals. With respect to funding applications for these projects: SSE and SNH have declined giving us any grants for this purpose; we have been offered £12,500 from the Postcode Trust for the Archaeology Trail, provided it is completed by June 2021; and a Stage 2 application has gone in to HES' *Coasts and Waters* funding for 50% (max. allowed – so £13K) for the seaward amenity site with an amended, not ideal, work schedule from October 2020-April 2021 (in hope). However, we need to have match funding in place before any work can begin, even if we are successful with being awarded the grant requested.
- ii) Owing to Covid-19 priorities, Baxters are not accepting any funding requests until at least August, although initial enquiries had suggested the interpretation and benches aspects would be an acceptable focus for a funding bid. The Nineveh Trust also has stalled all general funding applications. Pauline has identified two further smaller trusts to which she will make applications in the near future, but it is beginning to look as if we will only be able to progress the work planned if we are able to commit a substantial amount of our own monies, or have a successful donations campaign for the purpose.
- iii) We have had no further information about judging, visits or decisions with respect to the four 'new museum' awards for which we have been entered. Pauline and Karen took part in a discussion with staff of the Art Fund ('Museum of the Year') about our current circumstances on 14 May but have heard nothing since.

7. Commercial and retail operations

Two COG reports are attached, 30 March and 21 May, and provide a summary of how normal operations are suspended for the time being, but will be ready to go, when permitted in 'Phase 3' of the Scottish Government's route map ("Museums, galleries, cinemas, and libraries can open, subject to physical distancing and hygiene measures").

8. Any other business

Please, do keep in touch! It looks as if it will be a few weeks yet before we can reconvene as a Board but it is Important that everyone still feels involved and engaged, so do let us (Roy/Pauline) know how things are going for you, any good ideas for fund-raising in the autumn, events for the future and any thoughts you have that will ensure that, once the show is back on the road, we can resume the momentum of the first eight months.

Pauline Butler
28 May 2020.

Chairman's update for the AGM (written 18 June) with [update comments from Secretary \(27 July\)](#)

The final account for the 'new Museum' project was £40K over the contract sum and the fitting out was £15K over our estimated costs. This we considered a good outcome given the complexities of the conversion of the old Roads Depot/AAOR. We are pleased that Heritage Lottery has recently awarded us an additional £46K towards the cost of this work.

In January, having agreed the final building contract account and the cost of the installation and fitting out of the Museum, we decided to proceed with the installation of the café kitchen. By the middle of March, the contractors were within days of completing the work and commissioning the kitchen when the lockdown was announced.

The pandemic has affected everyone, with the Museum closed to the public since 19 March. Karen spent the first three weeks to good effect bringing her records, archive and artefacts store up to date and has been furloughed since. Susan took one week's holiday and has also been furloughed. The building has been regularly checked and statutory requirements have been carried out ongoing.

Since the Museum closed, we have been busy monitoring costs and have applied for grants as they became available. Museum Galleries Scotland have awarded us £26K to assist with the costs arising from the lockdown, which will of great assistance in supporting our cash requirements.

In the post-pandemic world our outdoor attractions will be more important than ever, enabling us to offer wide-open spaces for visitors to enjoy. So, we have continued to work on the two landscaping projects planned for this year, one behind the Museum to form an entrance and information areas, with seating, for the roundhouse walk on the hillside, and the other to construct an amenity hard-standing across the A832 main road, with a spectacular outlook "over the sea to Skye". Here we will install a set of steps, made from the blocks of concrete cores cut out from the AAOR, and a graded path which will lead down to a picnic area, and then on to link with the public footpath below. One interpretation panel will describe the geology in the immediate landscape and the other include information about our bardic traditions. The necessary planning consent was obtained in April. We also intend to restore and relocate the Rubh Re foghorn on the Museum forecourt. The estimates for these three aspects total just over £59k. We have been making grant applications to potential funders and, to date, have secured about 20% of the cost. ([Postcode Local Trust: £12,500.](#)) We would very much welcome donations towards these 'outdoors Museum' projects. [Several potential funders closed their general application processes as they diverted their funding to Covid-specific causes. So Pauline sought other potential sources of grant money. Five further speculative applications were made April-June. No positive responses \(nor rejections for that matter\) have yet been received.](#)

As I write this, we await government announcements as to when we will be permitted to reopen; we hope this will be in August and are making preparations necessary to adapt the building and provide the guidance and equipment we will require. We do hope you will find opportunity to visit as soon as this is possible. [Once the Scottish Government had confirmed that museums could open on 15 July, we brought back all staff from furlough on 6 July. Gairloch Museum reopened to the public Wednesday-Saturday, with many adjustments to our operational procedures, on 22 July. A decision is imminent as to whether a further grant request to the Heritage Emergency Fund for almost £10K towards the costs of reopening, almost half of which is for extra staffing costs, \(for cleaner and additional support for the Front of House supervision\), has been successful.](#)

Finally, our stunning new Museum is being recognised more widely across the sector. Although most judging and announcements have been delayed, we already know that we have been shortlisted for the Scottish Civic Trust My Place award for “community-led built environment transformation” and the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors Social Impact awards (in both the leisure and heritage categories). We have also been nominated for the Museums + Heritage 'best permanent display' and the very prestigious Art Fund's Museum of the Year, so, despite the huge challenges of Covid-19, we have much to celebrate. Decisions have been made for the RICS and Museums + Heritage awards and we were not amongst the 'winners'. Announcements are now delayed until the autumn for the other two awards.

99 members 'attended' the 2020 AGM which closed at 8pm on 14 July. All items where agreement or endorsement were required were carried unanimously. An overview of comments received has been compiled.

Roy Macintyre
18 June 2020 (for the AGM of 14 July)

Pauline Butler
27 July 2020