



DORNOCH HERITAGE SCIO
Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Trustees
Tuesday 2nd July 2024

1. **Present:** Andrew Senior – Chair (AS), Jerry Bishop (JB), Fiona McKinlay – Minutes (FM), Richard Hickson (RH), Fiona Hampton (FH)
Apologies: Alison Davies (AD)
In Attendance: Peter Wild (PW), Lynne Mahoney (LM)
2. **Declarations of Interest**
None
3. **Minutes of meeting held on 14th May 2024**
The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.
4. **Matters Arising**
 - a: *Succession Planning:* AD had approached John McMurray and Andy Kirby to discuss their potential involvement. Both declined but may reconsider at a later date. RH proposed investigating the Apprentice Trustee Scheme and FH the 'My Future, My Success' programme as possible means of involving younger people. It was agreed that we would wait for the outcome of the Governance Review before considering further action.
 - b: *Meeting with BID Chair:* AD and AS had attended an exploratory meeting to discuss means of income generation over the winter months. A discussion followed on the possibility of opening at weekends to display the tapestries that will be on loan from Inverness Castle and/or running an exhibition on Janet Horne / witches. It was suggested that access could be given for a small fee during workshops which would mean that additional staffing would not be required on those occasions. LM will involve Flora Lindsay in discussions as she is already working with the Dornoch Stitchers. JB volunteered to sit on a subcommittee to take this forward should one be formed.
5. **Financial Reports**
 - a. *Museum Financial Reports – JB/FM*

JB presented data to show that June visitor numbers were up 7.8% on 2023. The rise in entry fees together with 98.5% of visitors paying the higher rate has increased admission income by almost 20%. Shop sales are down by around 15% but Gift Aid income has risen so overall there is an increase in income of nearly 10% compared with June 2023, in line with our budget forecast.

FM had prepared a spreadsheet detailing the current funding positions of the MGS Outreach and Community Curation projects, and the Young Curators' Club. Funding for a Community Engagement Officer is awaited which will include some hours for the YCC. Co-op funding has been approved and Flora Lindsay will submit an application for next year. LM will apply to ESA.
 - b. *SCIO*

Report submitted under Item 8, Heritage Hub.
6. **MGS Accreditation**

LM was congratulated and thanked for her work on the accreditation documentation which was submitted in June. A response is expected from MGS within 6 months.
7. **SCIO Policies and Staff contracts**

All are now complete and signed off.

8. Heritage Hub/Museum Upgrading update

a. Funding Update

JB presented a project funding update showing an estimated surplus of £8,817. All funds are now either in hand or awaiting draw down of the balance of grants, apart from two donation pledges (£5,250) and the Community Regeneration Fund grant (£18,985) which has still to be signed off by the fund managers. The major outstanding expense is to the contractor, the amount of which remains an estimate despite JB's best efforts to obtain accurate figures. Following a recent site meeting (see below), JB remains confident that the project is still within the available budget.

b. Construction update including cashflow – JB/PW

On 26th June, the construction sub-committee (JB, PW and Stuart Gardiner) attended a site meeting with the main contractor (GMR Henderson), Quantity Surveyor (Torrance Partnership), and Architect/Contract Manager (Blueprint Architects). Prior to the meeting, a visit from Garry Ballantyne of Highland Council Building Standards had resulted in verbal approval of the Building Warrant being issued subject to final documentation being submitted by the Architect. A walk through the building followed with detailed discussions on a list of outstanding items. Responsibilities for action were allocated and agreement reached that handover will be scheduled for Friday 5th July.

c. Extension Fit Out

Oak tables, blue chairs, and dark grey cabinet doors and panels in the kitchen were agreed. JB shared a revised kitchen plan. Safety concerns were raised regarding the carrying of hot liquids and food through the building, and the shared use of the facilities by visitors, both of which require further thought.

LM presented a schedule for the work required in July and August to fit out the display areas. FH suggested movable frames for interpretation boards, as used in the Castle Gallery, and will pass on supplier details to LM. FH also suggested using some of the surplus for interpretation, e.g. on the tapestries and/or witches/Janet Horne. Following his security review, RH advised the installation of CCTV and a few minor items such as window locks. JB will take this forward.

d. Opening

Following discussion of LM's schedule of work, it was agreed that a target date of 31st August for a 'soft opening' was achievable. FH suggested a second event for the opening of the Highland tapestries exhibition.

9. Royal Dornoch Heritage Foundation / Pinehurst Links

AD and RH had attended a positive meeting with David Bell on 6th June. It was agreed in general that we should collaborate where it is mutually beneficial, including the sharing of exhibits when appropriate. Discussions will continue at a later date.

10. A.O.C.B.

JB proposed shelving for the YCC in the new storeroom. AS requested, additional shelving for archiving. Both were agreed.

11. Date of next meeting

20 August 2024, 10.30am. Historylinks Museum Community Room.

12. Historylinks Governance Review

Zoom meeting pre-arranged for 12 noon with Fiona Sinclair and Wendy West. Attended by AS, JB, FM.

Following introductions, the SCIO's acceptance of the contract was confirmed (AS will confirm in writing by e-mail) and agreement was reached on the proposed timetable. FS/WW will arrange one-to-one interviews with Board members and with LM in July, including a skills audit. They will also review our governance procedures. There will be an interim meeting with the Board on 1st August, followed by a final meeting to present their findings and recommendations on 16th or 17th September (date to be agreed). Meanwhile, JB will email them our Forward Plan and an Executive Summary of the Hub Extension Project Development Plan. JB will also inform The National Lottery that FS/WW have been engaged by the SCIO.