

# BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Minutes of a meeting of the Board of Trustees held on Friday, 9 May 2008, at 1100 hrs in the Board Room at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum.

## Trustees Present:

Mrs Margaret Elliott (Chairman)  
Mr Dan Harvey (Vice-Chairman)  
Dr Alastair Walker  
Mr Sean Neeson  
Ms Linda Beers  
Mr Tom Shaw  
Lt Col Harvey Bicker  
Ms Patricia Flanagan  
Mr Bill Montgomery

## In Attendance:

Mr Tim Cooke (Chief Executive)  
Dr Jim McGreevy (Director of Collections & Interpretation)  
Mrs Jude Helliker (Director of HR & Organisational Development)  
Ms Amanda Lilley (Director of Finance & Planning)  
Mr Marshall McKee (Director of Operations)  
Mrs Gillian McLean (Director of Marketing, Trading and Communications)  
Mr John Gilmour (Director of Development)  
Mr Oliver McKenna (Business Planning Manager)  
Ms Heather Henning (Committee Secretary)

## 1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from the following Trustees, Dame Geraldine Keegan and Mrs Wendy Osborne.

## 2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 25 January 2008

Board members approved the minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2008.

## 3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 January 2008

It was agreed that the majority of matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2008 would be addressed within the agenda.

### Review of Assets

The Chairman stated that the Review of Assets report was completed and submitted to the Department in March 2008.

### Museums and Libraries Archive Council

Dr McGreevy reported that specific advice regarding disposal from the collections was still awaited from the Museums and Libraries Archive Council (MLA). He said that he MLA had undergone major changes in term of restructuring and relocation and anticipated that this may be the reason for their delay in issuing guidance. The museum's accreditation was due for renewal in 2009 and Dr McGreevy was hopeful that the MLA would be able to provide some specific guidance on disposal from collections.

## 4. BUSINESS OF THE EXECUTIVE

### Wilson Ancestral Home

The Director of Operations referred to the recent fire at the Wilson ancestral home at Omagh and assured Board members that damage had been limited to the thatch and that the artefacts had been safely removed from the house. It was the intention to have the house rethatched as a matter of priority and he thanked museum staff and the NI Fire Brigade for their prompt action.

### US NI Investment Conference

The Chief Executive thanked those members of the Board and museum staff involved with the preparations for the recent USNI Investment Conference and said that the assistance which the museum provided in terms of a launch venue and exhibits of paintings at Stormont and Hillsborough Castle was welcomed by Stormont and Mr Neeson, on behalf of the Assembly Commission, thanked the museum for its support.

### 4.1 Business Plan Quarterly Update

The Chief Executive said that the key performance indicators (KPIs) reflected a very healthy picture of the organisation with visitor numbers exceeding the target by almost 50,000 particularly as the Ulster Museum was closed for refurbishment. There were strong performances across the group particularly from W5 and the Ulster American Folk Park. The numbers of website visits and educational visits were also good and the fact that 99% of the collections were now held in acceptable, good or excellent conditions was a swift improvement on the issues raised by the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) and the NI Audit Office report into Collections Management within the organisation. The one KPI which had not been achieved was the digitization of fine art images. The Chief Executive said that the target was probably too ambitious as there was an issue of accessibility during this period of storage however there were new targets within the next plan. The organisation had also shown a strong performance in terms of salary costs, self-generated income and a reduction in the average days lost sick per employee.

Mr Neeson, who was stepping down from the Board at the end of June 2008, expressed disappointment at the lack of maritime heritage within Northern Ireland and the fact that the issue of *The Result* had not yet been addressed and appealed to those colleagues who returned to the Board to keep the issue at the top of the agenda. The Chief Executive said that wider partnerships needed to be in place to pursue the issue of maritime strategy. He was hopeful however that momentum was building that would have the support of senior civil servants and the necessary funding to enable a clear strategy to emerge that National Museums Northern Ireland could be part of and support and assured Mr Neeson that the museum would continue to press the issue of maritime heritage and *The Result* at every opportunity.

Dr Walker endorsed Mr Neeson's comments but agreed that this was not an issue that National Museums Northern Ireland could pursue on its own. He said that the problem was one of fragmentation of responsibility and he hoped that the museum could champion the process of helping to create the co-ordination and partnerships needed to put a strategy together.

Mr Harvey also commended the fund-raising efforts to date particularly in the current economic climate.

The Chairman said that the KPIs reflected an organisation which had changed beyond recognition during the past 10 years. It was an excellent example of a public sector organisation that was working well especially as the transformation had been achieved through difficult financial circumstances and the Chairman was hopeful that the next few years would show further progress.

#### **4.2 2008/09 Business Plan**

The Chief Executive advised Board members that 2008/09 Business Plan had been formally approved by DCAL subject to one or two minor amendments.

#### **4.3 Comprehensive Spending Review**

The Chief Executive detailed the revenue and capital allocations for the incoming year. Trustees welcomed the 15% increase in the museum's revenue budget which would enable the museum to deliver against its business plan targets and the significant capital allocation over the next three years to progress projects such as the Collections Resource Centre, the Cultra Manor project, the development of the organisation's commercial infrastructure and so on.

#### **4.4 Ulster Museum Update**

The Director of Development reported that the project was proceeding according to plan and that the rebuild of the interior of the building had commenced. Beck Interiors had recently been appointed as exhibition fit-out contractors for the science and history galleries and would begin work later this month. The Director of Development briefed the Board on the proposed content of the science and history galleries detailing the engagement that had taken place with external specialists from universities, the education sector and community organisations regarding the exhibition content.

The Director of Operations referred to recent correspondence from DCAL and DENI seeking clarification about how the museum intended to use Irish language in the refurbished Ulster Museum. The Director of Operations said that in recognition of the National Museums obligations in terms of the European Charter it was the intention to consult widely with speakers of Irish language and Ulster Scots to determine how the museum can make information available in galleries in different format but it was not the museum's intention to have its labels or panels in tri-lingual as there were significant issues to be addressed in terms of labelling. The museum would of course, given the nature of its audiences, be developing information and other interpretative materials in a wide range of European languages however the museum had special obligations vis-à-vis Ulster Scots and the Irish language. Mr Shaw endorsed the proposal from the Director of Operations.

The Chief Executive advised the Board that he had been asked about the museum's involvement with the Maze site and the development of the Conflict Transformation Centre at a recent meeting with the CAL Committee. The Chief Executive had advised Committee members that the museum was not closely involved in the development of the concept and there was unable to comment on the matter. A number of Board members made reference to a range of material associated with the conflict of the last thirty years that may provide useful archive material for future exhibitions within the history galleries at the Ulster Museum.

#### **4.5 Commercial Strategy**

The Chief Executive advised the Board that the draft Commercial Strategy had been discussed at the General Purposes and Finance Committee and Marketing, Development and Fund-raising Committee and invited the Director of Marketing, Communications and Trading to summarise the approach that was being proposed.

The Director of Marketing, Communications & Trading said that the focus of the strategy over the next three years in terms of capital development was to support and develop the existing retail infrastructure at each of the sites with the proviso that some of the existing retail facilities may be relocated within the site. It was also the intention to franchise catering at each of the sites and to focus on promoting National Museums Northern Ireland as a premier venue hire facility. The Director of Marketing, Communications and Trading detailed the additional capital that had been allocated to upgrade the retail provision, lecture theatre and café and restaurant areas at the Ulster

Museum and said that the residual of the additional capital funding would be used to develop a new corporate website. Trustees noted there would also be opportunities to promote and develop *Titanic* branding and merchandising in the lead up to the *Titanic* centenary. The draft strategy included plans to enhance the current rural area at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum into an historic working farm to attract additional visitors and enhance educational programmes.

In response to a query from Mr Neeson regarding Cultra Manor, the Director of Development explained that National Museums Northern Ireland had been asked by DCAL to revise the business case so that it focussed on the restoration benefits of the manor house, its use for museum events, public programme and to generate income. The business case would be submitted at the end of the month and providing it was approved it was the intention to begin working on the project towards the end of this calendar year/beginning of 2009 for a period of approximately 8 months.

Following the recommendation of the General Purposes and Finance Committee, the draft commercial strategy was approved by the Board of Trustees.

#### **4.6 WhoWhatWhereWhenWhy (W5)**

Dr Walker advised the Board that there had been significant issues around the funding of W5 and briefed the Board accordingly the detail of which was reported under "*Reserved Business*".

#### **4.7 Approval of Loans**

The Board formally approved the request for a number of loans from the Ulster Museum's collection (archive copies attached to minutes). Board members noted the special circumstances surrounding the various loans which were retrospectively approved.

### **5. BUSINESS OF CHAIRMAN**

None.

### **6. TRUSTEES SUB-COMMITTEES**

#### **6.1 Staffing Committee**

##### **6.1.1 Approval of minutes of meeting held on 14 December 2007**

Trustees approved the minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 2007.

##### **6.1.2 Verbal report of meeting held on 7 March 2008**

The Chairman of the Staffing Committee said that many of the items discussed at the meeting on 7 March had been addressed within the current agenda. Mr Shaw said there had been good progress in terms of the recruitment process however the Committee were disappointed that the Director of Learning and Partnership post had not been filled however other options to appoint a successful candidate were under consideration. The Committee also noted that the VER scheme was progressing.

Mr Shaw advised the Board that significant work had been undertaken by staff within the organisation to improve internal communications and to develop an intranet. The Committee had received a demonstration of the intranet and its potential and Mr Shaw congratulated staff for the excellent work that had been undertaken to date.

#### **6.2 General Purposes and Finance Committee**

##### **6.2.1 Approval of minutes of meeting held on 14 December 2007**

Trustees approved the minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 2007.

### **6.2.2 Verbal report of meeting held on 7 March 2008**

The Chairman of the General Purposes and Finance Committee members noted that OTC Ltd had tabled a report which was due to be discussed at the next meeting of the W5 Board on 25 March 2008. The Committee also considered the Senior Civil Service Pay Strategy recommendations and noted that the recommendations had received Departmental approval. The Chairman advised the Committee that legislation in relation to the transfer of Armagh County Museum to local authority control was being drafted and it was agreed that no further action would be taken in respect of the draft agreement until a copy of the draft legislation was available.

The Committee noted that the Museums and Libraries Archive Council (MLA) had still to issue advice about how changes to its Code of Ethics should be reflected in National Museums' disposal policy. The Financial Report to December 2007 was also recommended to the Board for approval and the Committee were briefed on the new income and expenditure allocations for the next three years. The Committee also considered the draft Commercial Strategy and recommended that it be approved by the Board.

## **6.3 Audit Committee**

### **6.3.1 Approval of minutes of meeting held on 25 January 2008**

Trustees approved the minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2008

### **6.3.2 Verbal report of meeting held on 9 May 2008**

The Chairman of the Audit Committee said that business of the meeting comprised a review of major risks, a review of the year end audit report and the normal quarterly review of outstanding audit recommendations. Representatives from the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) who were also present at the meeting presented their audit strategy for the coming year and their intended method of dealing with the year end accounts. Dr McGreevy, Director of Collections and Interpretation also presented a paper on the audit checks of the collections which were introduced on a pilot basis last year.

Internal audit examined 13 different areas, four of which received limited assurance with the remainder being given a satisfactory level of assurance with KPMG concluding that they were satisfied with their examinations of the various areas. Mr Harvey reported that the Audit Committee were satisfied that the four areas which received limited assurances were being addressed as management regularly reported on these issues, some of which were a legacy of the past resulting from a lack of systems/technology and human resources.

Mr Harvey referred to the Gateway Review, previously circulated to Board members, and said that the recommendations of the review team were being satisfactorily addressed and that this was acknowledged within the report.

## **6.4 Marketing, Development and Fund-raising Committee**

### **6.4.1 Approval of minutes of meeting held on 15 January 2008**

Trustees approved the minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2008.

### **6.4.2 Verbal report of meeting held on 10 April 2008**

The Chair of the Marketing, Development and Fund-raising Committee said that a number of issues discussed at the meeting had again been addressed within the current agenda. Committee members were updated on the recruitment process to appoint a Manager of Market Research and Planning and a Web Marketing Manager and noted that a Retail Manager had been appointed and would join the organisation on 9 June 2008. The Committee was also briefed on the arrangements to cover the Director of Marketing, Communications and Trading's maternity leave.

Ms Beers reminded the Board that the Head of PR and Communications post remained vacant said that JPR had been awarded a one year contract to provide consultancy in the interim. The Committee welcomed the increased marketing budget which would be used to raise the profile of the organisation and to complete a number of plans within the marketing directorate and subject to the approval of that budget a three year marketing strategy had been developed and would be presented to the Committee at its meeting at the end of May.

The Committee also received an update on the results of the User and Attitude (U&A) Market Research and the Director of Development briefed the meeting on the key development issues and the progress of the fund-raising effort for the Ulster Museum project. The draft Commercial Strategy was also reviewed and the Committee recommended its approval by the Board.

## **7. WHOWHATWHEREWHENWHY (W5)**

### **7.1 Minutes of W5 Board meeting held on 18 December 2007**

Trustees noted the minutes of the W5 Board meeting held on 18 December 2007.

### **7.2 Minutes of W5 Board meeting held on 29 January 2008**

Trustees noted the minutes of the W5 Board meeting held on 29 January 2008.

### **7.3 Minutes of W5 Board meeting held on 26 February 2008**

Trustees noted the minutes of the W5 Board meeting held on 26 February 2008.

### **7.4 Minutes of W5 Board meeting held on 28 March 2008**

Trustees noted the minutes of the W5 Board meeting held on 28 March 2008.

### **7.5 Verbal report of W5 Board meeting held on 25 April 2008**

Dr Walker said that he had already reported on the major issue discussed at the meeting of 25 April however he felt it should also be noted that W5 had had a very good year. The month of March was the best on record and during Easter week there had been 15,500 admissions to the science centre. This strong performance was reflected in the key performance indicators (KPIs) where most of the targets had been exceeded. The most significant target was perhaps that of 210,000 visitors for the year. Actual visitors for the year totalled 235,000 from admissions only. Combined with corporate and outreach admissions this figure rose to 265,000 resulting in a better than anticipated financial outturn for the organisation. Board members acknowledged W5's success and that it continued to thrive.

## **8.0 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

### **8.1 Insolvency Legislation**

The Chairman advised the Board the Insolvency (Disqualification from Office: General) Order (Northern Ireland) 2008, which named a number of public bodies including National Museums Northern Ireland, amended the Museums and Galleries (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 which named a number of grounds under which a Trustee was disqualified including insolvency and that these grounds had been broadened to include a trustee who was the subject of a bankruptcy restrictions order.

## **9.0 DATE, TIME AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Board of Trustees would be held on Friday, 12 September 2008, in the Board Room of the Evans Building at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum.

Signed: ..... Date: .....

Copies to: Dame Geraldine Keegan and Mrs Wendy Osborne and File.