

05 December 2005

MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES OF NORTHERN IRELAND BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Minutes of a meeting of the Board of Trustees held on Friday, 16 December 2005, at 10.45 am, in Cultra Manor at the Ulster Folk & Transport Museum.

Present: Mrs Margaret Elliott (Chair)
Sir Kenneth Bloomfield
Mr Dan Harvey
Dame Geraldine Keegan
Professor Eithne McLaughlin
Mr Sean Neeson
Ms Wendy Osborne
Mr Tom Shaw
Dr Alastair Walker
Miss Linda Beers
Mr Bill Montgomery
Mr Harvey Bicker
Ms Patricia Flanagan

In Attendance: Mr Tim Cooke (Chief Executive)
Mrs Jude Helliker (Director of HR & Organisational Development)
Ms Amanda Lilley (Director of Finance and Planning)
Mr John Gilmour (Director of Development)
Mrs Heather Henning (Minute Secretary)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Mr Marshall McKee, Director of Operations.

The Chairman welcomed Ms Sarah Bentley, a law student, to the meeting. Trustees noted that Ms Bentley presence at the meeting was as a third party observer to broaden her experience and understanding of the corporate governance issues faced by Boards in the public sector.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 30 SEPTEMBER 2005

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 September 2005 were approved.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 30 SEPTEMBER 2005

It was agreed that any matters arising from the minutes of the September 2005 meeting would be addressed within the agenda of the meeting.

4. BUSINESS OF EXECUTIVE

4.1 Executive Summary

The Executive Summary for October to December 2005 which detailed activities undertaken during the past quarter and set out proposed targets for January to March 2006 was noted by the Board. The Director of Development provided the following update on the main capital projects currently in progress.

Ulster Museum: The final design for the building was close to completion and Haley Sharpe Design (HSD), a Leicester based company, had joined the Hamilton Architects team to design the exhibition space in preparation for the HLF Stage 2 submission in April 2006. Following the submission of the bid, work would then commence on detailed designs for the building and procurement of the main contractors. The target date for the start of

construction work remained November 2006 with completion in late 2008 and the launch of the new building in early 2009. An outreach programme was being developed to maintain contact with the museum's audience during the period of closure. The procurement of temporary storage for the collections was also close to completion.

Ulster Folk and Transport Museum: The construction of the Gilford Silent Cinema at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum had fallen behind schedule as a result of delays in procurement however the programme was back on schedule for completion by the summer of 2006.

Ulster American Folk Park: Designs for the layout of the entrance and car park area at the Ulster American Folk Park had now been completed. Despite some delays concerning procurement, the contractors had given an assurance that work would begin on site in early January 2006 and that the majority of the work would be completed prior to Easter.

The Chief Executive reminded Board members that the 05/06 business plan was predicated on an earlier launch of the VER scheme. The delayed launch of the scheme had threatened the organisation with a potential deficit for the year however a bid submitted to the October Monitoring Round had secured a sum of £250K by way of compensation. The organisation remained on target to break-even within the current financial year.

The Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development advised the Board that six members of staff had applied for early retirement under the first phase of the VER Scheme and would be leave the organisation at the end of January 2006. Phase II of the scheme was scheduled for launch in March 2006 with Phase III in June/July 2007 subject to the agreement of the union.

The Chief Executive advised the Board that the Department seemed supportive of the Executive's proposals in relation to the reprofiling of capital money for accommodation and storage purposes and that the Executive was intending to proceed with the themes broadly outlined in the letter to DCAL which had been copied to Board members.

4.2 Draft Business Plan 2006/07

The Board agreed that the draft business plan 2006/07 was a comprehensive and challenging document. In response to some comments from the Chairman regarding the key performance indicators (KPI's) detailed within the plan, the Chief Executive stated that the document framework had been drawn from the draft Corporate Plan 2005/08 and added to by the Strategic Outline Case (SOC) which Trustees had endorsed earlier in the year. The KPI's set out in the plan were those outlined in Year 2 of the draft Corporate Plan with some adjustments to take account of the closure of the Ulster Museum in August 2006. The CE acknowledged that the 06/07 plan included tasks from the previous year's plan that had yet to be completed. The reason being was that although these tasks would move the organisation forward they required the leadership from the directorates of Collections and Interpretation, Learning and Partnership and Marketing, Trading and Communication. The Chief Executive said that the recruitment of these three key posts had now been authorised by DCAL.

Although supportive of the plan, Dr Walker said he would be keen to see some slightly more detailed outworking of the development of MAGNI's maritime heritage. The Chief Executive agreed to amend the draft Business Plan accordingly. Mr Neeson referred to the correspondence (previously copied to Board members) between himself and the Minister regarding the lack of Northern Ireland representation on the National Historic Ships' Advisory Committee and said that while it was gratifying that Northern Ireland would now be represented on this unit he remained concerned by the Minister's statement that Government was considering which body had responsibility for maritime heritage in Northern Ireland. The Ulster Folk and Transport Museum had traditionally been responsible for maritime heritage within the province and Mr Neeson supported Dr Walker's suggestion that this should be drawn to the attention of the Minister.

Professor McLaughlin referred to the aim of diversity and proposed that MAGNI view its objectives in terms of the "2007 Equality of Opportunities for All" theme. In support of this

proposal Professor McLaughlin made the following suggestions, firstly that the diversity exhibition at Armagh County Museum travel to other venues, secondly that May Day be designated as a "free" admissions day and thirdly that MAGNI engage in an oral history project with various groups who had expressed an interest in working with the museum. The Chairman said that MAGNI ought to have a designated Diversity Policy to enable staff to align their activities to that policy. The Chief Executive offered to brief Board members on the activities currently being undertaken in respect of diversity at the March Board meeting. In the meantime, he agreed to consider Professor McLaughlin's proposals and if necessary discuss these in more detail.

Mrs Osborne questioned whether the plan placed sufficient emphasis on the importance of MAGNI's role as a collector. The Chief Executive said he believed the plan placed the collections as the number one strategic aim of the organisation and this aim was clearly set out under item 5.1 namely "to develop, manage, care for and interpret the collections of the National Museums and Galleries of Northern Ireland".

Sir Kenneth Bloomfield suggested that the strategic aim of "collections" be replaced by phrase "the enhancement, care and presentation of collections". The Chief Executive agreed to consider the issue and Trustees therefore approved the Draft Business Plan 2006/07 subject to the observations of the Board.

4.3 Review of Public Administration

The Chief Executive referred to the announcement by the Secretary of State regarding the recent Review of Public Administration and the subsequent press release, with addendum, by Lord Rooker which indicated the transfer of Armagh County Museum (ACM) from MAGNI to the new local government authority that was to subsume Armagh. On the day of the announcement the Chief Executive also received a letter from the Permanent Secretary of DCAL stating that the press notice accompanying the release of the RPA highlighted the transfer of ACM to the relevant local authority and stating that there would be a further review of all NDPBs with a subsequent announcement in March 2006. The Permanent Secretary acknowledged that the announcement would raise uncertainty amongst staff especially within ACM and assured the Chief Executive that DCAL would work closely with everyone involved throughout the coming months, including trade union representatives, to ensure that the changes are made in partnership. The letter also gave an assurance that in the transferring change process the legal rights of staff would be fully protected. All of this information had been copied to Trustees and staff.

The Chief Executive said that to date he had not received any further correspondence outlining the rationale behind the decision and no further information in relation to the process. The Director of HR & OD had been in touch with staff who were concerned about the situation. The Chief Executive advised the Board members that he had received a letter from the Curator of Armagh County Museum, asking him to reflect various staff concerns to the Board. The NIPSA representative, Kim Christophi, had also written to the Chairman expressing the union's concern about the proposed transfer and seeking information about members' pensions, employment rights, job security, general terms and conditions etc.

The Department had indicated that these decisions had been taken by the RPA group and were not now for consultation however some preliminary discussions had taken place with senior DCAL officials regarding the further review of all NDPBs and it had emerged from these discussions that the Northern Ireland Museums Council (NIMC) had indicated to DCAL that their preferred option would be to merge with the national museums.

The Chairman said that she had not gained any sense from the discussions that had taken place so far that the museum would lose any of its responsibilities outside of the transfer of Armagh County Museum. Following a brief discussion it was agreed that the Chairman would write to the Permanent Secretary, on behalf of the Board, asking for the rationale behind the decision and seeking clarification of the assurances which had been given and how the process was to be taken forward.

4.4 Senior Structures

The Chief Executive referred to the letter from the Permanent Secretary dated 5 December 2005, copied to Board members, which in principle approved the recruitment of the following senior posts namely a Director of Collections and Interpretation a Director of Marketing, Trading and Communications and a Director of Learning and Partnership subject to various conditions set out by the Permanent Secretary. Having briefed Trustees on these conditions, the Director of HR and Organisational Development sought the approval of the Board to proceed with the recruitment of these posts early in 2006. Board members approved this request.

4.5 MAGNI Branding

The Chief Executive said that market research had shown that the MAGNI brand was not well recognised by the public at large as an organisation. He acknowledged the work that had gone into creating a corporate identity for the merged organisation however it had not translated into the public arena in a particularly successful way. Furthermore MAGNI as a concept had not been well received by many of the staff either.

Marketing staff had therefore experimented with different types of branding to test the concept of "national museums". Initial responses to this concept had been positive and the Chief Executive sought the views of the Board to the idea of migrating from the MAGNI brand to a brand that would essentially be around the "National Museums Northern Ireland" idea. Board members supported the proposal which they felt was a very unifying and simple way of describing the organisation's function.

5. BUSINESS OF CHAIRMAN

5.1 RUC George Cross Foundation

The Chairman advised Board members that they had received an invitation from the RUC George Cross Foundation to visit their memorial garden, the Chairman agreed to explore the possibility of a visit to the venue.

6. TRUSTEES' COMMITTEES

6.1 Staffing Committee

6.1.1 Approval of minutes of meeting held on 20 September 2005

Board members approved the minutes of the meeting held on 20 September 2005.

6.1.2 Approval of minutes of meeting held on 18 November 2005

Board members approved the minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2005.

6.2 General Purposes and Finance Committee

6.2.1 Approval of minutes of meeting held on 16 September 2005

Board members approved the minutes of the meeting held on 16 September 2005.

6.2.2 Approval of minutes of meeting held on 18 November 2005

Board members approved the minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2005.

6.3 Audit Committee

6.3.1 Approval of minutes of meeting held on 30 September 2005

Board members approved the minutes of the meeting held on 30 September 2005.

6.3.2 Verbal report of meeting held on 16 December 2005

The Chairman of the Audit Committee, Sir Kenneth Bloomfield, said that Committee members had undertaken a careful review of the Financial Statements for 2004/05 and subject to a number of minor amendments recommended their adoption by the Board of Trustees.

6.3.3 Adoption of Financial Statements for 2004/05

The Board of Trustees formally adopted the Financial Statements for 2004/05.

6.4 Marketing Committee

6.4.1 Approval of minutes of meeting held on 20 October 2005

The Chairman of the Marketing, Development and Fund-Raising Committee, Mr Bill Montgomery, said that the Marketing Committee universally endorsed the rebranding proposal. He encouraged any Board members who had been unable to attend the briefing on the progress of the capital programmes to contact the Director of Development to arrange another date. Trustees would be invited to the next meeting of the Marketing, Development and Fund-raising Committee meeting to discuss suggested long-term funding proposals. Board members approved the minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2005.

7. WHOWHATWHEREWHENWHY (W5)

7.1 Minutes of W5 Board meeting held on 25 August 2005

Board members noted the minutes of the W5 Board meeting held on 25 August 2005.

7.2 Minutes of W5 Board meeting held on 30 September 2005

Board members noted the minutes of the W5 Board meeting held on 30 September 2005.

7.3 Minutes of W5 Board meeting held on 20 October 2005

Board members noted the minutes of the W5 Board meeting held on 20 October 2005.

7.4 Verbal report of W5 Board Meeting held on 22 November 2005

Mr Harvey, Chairman of the W5 Board, reported that visitor numbers for the year to date had been significantly reduced principally as a result of a fire on the roof of the building, above W5, in the heating and ventilation plant. Estimated damage was in the region of £300k. Limited heating and ventilation during the repair period had affected visitor figures particularly over the Halloween period. The "START" exhibition had also been closed for a 6 week refurbishment. As part of the refurbishment "START" had been enlarged and two new areas entitled "FIT TO GO" and "WEATHER WATCH" had also recently opened. A claim for consequential loss had been submitted.

The travelling exhibition "GET ANIMATED" developed, designed and fabricated entirely by W5 staff and featuring "Wallace and Gromit" was currently on show at Bristol where it had generated 45k visitors. The exhibition had been developed under the umbrella of the ReDiscover consortium and was scheduled to come to W5 in October 2006.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

9. DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Board of Trustees would take place on 24 March 2005. The venue and time of the meeting would be notified in due course.