

26 January 2007

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Minutes of a meeting of the Board of Trustees held on Friday, 26 January 2007 at 1130 hrs, in the Evans Room at Cultra Manor at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum.

Present:

Mrs Margaret Elliott (Chairman)
Mr Dan Harvey (Vice-Chairman)
Miss Linda Beers
Mr Harvey Bicker
Mr Tom Shaw
Mr Bill Montgomery
Dame Geraldine Keegan
Mrs Wendy Osborne
Dr Alastair Walker
Mr Sean Neeson

In attendance:

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

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Professor Eithne McLaughlin, Ms Patricia Flanagan and Mr Marshall McKee, Director of Operations.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 26 October 2006

The Board approved the minutes of the meeting held on 26 October 2006.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20 October 2006

It was agreed that any matters arising from the minutes of the October 2006 meeting would be addressed within the agenda of the meeting.

4. BUSINESS OF EXECUTIVE

4.1 Executive Summary

Visitor Figures -The Chief Executive reported that visitor figures were in line with year end targets and took into account the closure of the Ulster Museum on 1 October. The launch of the outreach programme and its accompanying schedule, detailing over 200 outreach events, had been well received by the press and the museum's partnership with the Library Board was very encouraging. Special Hallowe'en and Christmas events staged at the Ulster American Folk Park had also resulted in increased visitor figures. A new updated website had also been launched as part of the overall outreach programme and would be used to update visitors and users about the Ulster Museum project.

Events and Exhibition – A major exhibition of 60 paintings from the Ulster Museum entitled “*Treasures from the North*” was being staged by the National Gallery of Ireland in Dublin in the spring of 2007. Trustees noted that the exhibition was one of the largest ever exchanges of cultural material cross-border.

Storage – The process of decanting the collections from the Ulster Museum to off-site storage was progressing well and the Chief Executive advised Trustees that they would have an opportunity to visit the new storage facilities in due course. In response to a query from Mr Montgomery regarding the decant process, the Director of Collections & Interpretation explained that the vast majority of the collections from the Ulster Museum were computerised and that this database was being used to track the movement of objects however the decant process would be used to audit and refine the database and was being run in tandem with the documentation plan.

Smithsonian Festival – The Chief Executive reported that Union Station, in Washington DC, had been secured to stage a *Titanic* themed exhibition, for a three week period. It would be co-ordinated by National Museums Northern Ireland as part of the *ReDiscover Northern Ireland* programme. The Director of Marketing, Trading and Communications said that the museum was working with a number of other organisations to tell the story of Belfast’s industrial development over the last century. A number of organisations had expressed an interest in being involved in the exhibition and the Director of Marketing, Trading and Communications would be meeting these groups over the coming weeks.

National Museums Northern Ireland would also be involved in the main programme of events in Washington DC staged on the Mall with a number of craft experts from the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum contributing to exhibits. Discussions were ongoing regarding the inclusion of some emigration themes relating to the collections and expertise at the Ulster American Folk Park. The Chief Executive said that the possibility of staging a small high-profile art exhibition to coincide with the festival was still being explored but to date an appropriate venue had not been available. The formal launch of the *Titanic* website, funded by the PEACE II project and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB), was scheduled towards the end of February 2007 to tie-in with the launch of the Smithsonian Festival.

A brief discussion ensued regarding the different aspects of the festival and the costs associated with participating in the event. Board members welcomed the opportunity that the festival offered to publicise National Museums Northern Ireland both at home and abroad.

Ulster Museum Project – The Director of Development reported that the main construction work was now expected to commence mid May 2007 following a decision by the Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) to change the contract from “design and build” to “traditional procurement”. It was the intention to carry out some enabling work such as repairs to the roof and other structures ahead of the main contract together with asbestos surveys and other health checks. The exhibition designers had been appointed and the exhibition design and fit-out was scheduled for completion by March 2009.

The Director of Development advised Board members that the Environment and Heritage Service (EHS) had given listed building consent to the project and providing full planning approval could be secured within a reasonable time-frame the project remained on target for completion and re-opening in Spring 2009.

The Director of Development reminded Trustees that HLF had approved the museum’s Stage II application in December 2006 which had secured £4.5m towards the project. DCAL’s Capital Programme Board had also supported the business case to realign £2.2m, from the £3.5m originally allocated to update visitor services, to the Ulster Museum project and their recommendation had been forwarded to DFP for final approval. Fund-raising was progressing well with 40% of the £1m fund-raising target achieved to date.

The decant of collections from the Ulster Museum was expected to be complete by March 2007 with staff exiting the building in planned stages shortly afterwards.

Following a brief discussion about the considerable backlog of planning applications within the Planning Service, the Chairman said that the Board of Trustees would welcome another meeting with the project's professional team to discuss the risks associated with the traditional contract process. The Director of Development agreed to organise a meeting between the architects and the Board of Trustees.

4.2 PAC Report and Memorandum of Reply

The Chief Executive explained that National Museums Northern Ireland had been assisting DCAL and DFP in drafting government's formal response (Memorandum of Reply (MOR)) to the PAC Committee's report. Government's response in this instance was led, on behalf of government, by the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP). The Chief Executive drew the Board's attention to the following commitments which had been made on behalf of National Museums Northern Ireland.

***Conclusion 7** of the PAC report required National Museums Northern Ireland to be more proactive with its disposals policy stating that the museum should subject its disposals policy to public consultation.*

The specific recommendation of the PAC Committee was that National Museums Northern Ireland's disposals policy, which the Executive had undertaken to review in the light of the wider developments in the sector, should be put to public consultation. The recommendation however had also been extended to all bodies throughout the United Kingdom. The PAC Committee had been alerted to the Museums' Association Guidelines and Accreditation Scheme.

***Conclusion 9** referred to "The Result" and the fact that National Museums Northern Ireland had undertaken, during 2007/08, to carry out a further economic appraisal of options for its future preservation and display.*

***Conclusion 10** stated that National Museums Northern Ireland should carry out a comprehensive review of its estate to determine the potential for disposal of property that was not essential to the organisation's core functions.*

The Chief Executive referred to the discussions that had taken place at the Board of Trustees' Away Day in November 2006. The Board had taken the view that National Museums Northern Ireland should review its estate on the understanding that it was a strategic review of the future use of the museum estate which took into account the strategic objectives of the museum and its statutory responsibilities.

The Chief Executive said that some further amendments had been made to **Conclusion 6**. The revised response provided further details on the upgraded storage facilities at Newtownards and the new storage facilities for the Ulster Museum collections. Based on the same criteria used by NIAO in its initial determination of the museum's stores, the museum had moved from a situation where 60% of its stores had been deemed "unacceptable" to 78% of the storage facilities being "acceptable" "good" or "excellent" which was clearly a major improvement.

The Chief Executive said that National Museums Northern Ireland would be held accountable for the commitments it had given and stated that DCAL, as part of its accountability process, will have to monitor the response and implementation of these actions. The Audit Office will also review the museum's actions on a regular basis.

Mr Neeson advised Board members that he had been co-opted on to the Advisory Committee of National Historic Ships which succeeded the National Historic Ships Committee (NHSC). The new advisory body was keenly interested in "The Result" and Mr Neeson hoped that a future meeting of the committee would be held in Belfast to examine the whole development of maritime heritage in Northern Ireland.

Trustees noted the draft Memorandum of Reply to the PAC Report.

4.3 2007/08 Business Plan

The Chief Executive said that the 2007/08 Business Plan set out a challenging set of objectives and as part of the transformation agenda, the organisation would continue to focus on the following four broad themes outlined in the Corporate Strategy -

- increasing public engagement
- developing our physical spaces for visitors, collections and staff
- improving organisational effectiveness and
- achieving financial sustainability

Delivering on major capital projects such as the Ulster Museum project and implementing the reform and modernisation programmes remained key themes as was securing future revenue and capital funding as well as implementing significant improvements in the fields of collections care and management. It was also the intention to increase the emphasis on outreach and partnership activity across the province.

Following a careful examination by the Director of Marketing, Communication and Trading, a number of the key performance indicators (KPIs) relating to visitor figures and education visits had been adjusted to take account of the Ulster Museum closure. A corresponding adjustment would be made to the Corporate Strategy prior to the final print run. Trustees noted that some of the KPIs which referred to collections had yet to be advised (eg % available on internet) and would hopefully be inserted into the document over the next two months.

The Chief Executive said that not all of the activities being undertaken throughout the organisation were detailed in the business plan as it had been deliberately paired back to focus on the main thrust of projects being undertaken.

The Director of Finance & Planning said there was a need to clarify an exact definition of "admin costs" with DCAL to ensure the museum was being measured consistently as one of the aspects of the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) was an overall anticipated 2% annual savings year-on-year. The Director of Finance and Planning said that the financial projections set out how National Museums Northern Ireland intended to live within its annual grant-in-aid but required some further work before the final document was published. A detailed operating budget would be presented in due course to the General Purposes and Finance Committee for approval.

Dr Walker said that within the current Corporate Strategy the museum had a commitment to have a strategy in place for the better utilisation of the maritime collection by the end of 2009. Accepting the constraints that the museum was working within, he suggested that the strategy to better utilise the museum's maritime collection should be part of the economic appraisal suggested within the PAC Report. It was therefore agreed that the commitment to conduct a detailed appraisal of options for the future restoration of *The Result* detailed under Priority Activities and Aims for 2007-08 be reworded as follows –

"Conduct a detailed appraisal of options for the future restoration and display of *The Result*, **in the context of a strategy for maritime collections** and recognising its position as one of the UK's core collection of historic ships".

Mr Shaw also suggested that some sort of credit should be sought within the KPIs for outreach events as people were still visiting the museum albeit not at home and that this could possibly be done by way of a footnote.

Subject to the minor amendments mentioned above, Board members congratulated the Executive on producing an excellent plan.

Annual Report and Accounts 2005/2006

The Director of Finance and Planning referred to the 2005/2006 Annual Report and Accounts and said this was the first time that an amalgamated document had been presented to the Board for approval. Trustees noted that the Financial Statements for the organisation were consolidated financial statements which included the annual results of WhoWhatWhereWhenWhy (W5). The museum had also elected to adopt the Charities SORP (Statement of Recommended Practice) which had resulted in some substantial adjustments to the accounts and their presentation. In highlighting the main changes, the Director of Finance and Planning said that the new format would enable the museum to make comparisons with other UK national museums and provide more meaningful information about the museum's activities and its achievements to users of the accounts.

The Director of Finance and Planning said that the NIAO had raised two issues in relation to the 05/06 Annual Report and Accounts. The first referred to a request by the NIAO for the inclusion of some additional information within the Statement on Internal Control regarding their report on Collections Management in the National Museums and Galleries of Northern Ireland. The second issue concerned the inclusion of a provision for the future funding of the Voluntary Early Retirement (VER) Scheme which DCAL had specifically requested be included within the balance sheet under Debtors and Provision for Liability and Charges. Trustees noted that the matter had been discussed by the Audit Committee and agreed that the Director of Finance and Planning and a representative from the NIAO approach DCAL to resolve the matter. The Chairman of the Audit Committee, Mr Harvey said that this was an issue between departments and was confident that the matter could be resolved. With the agreement of the Audit Committee, Mr Harvey recommended the approval of the 2005/2006 Annual Report and Accounts subject to the resolution of these outstanding issues. Mr Harvey's recommendation was proposed by Mr Montgomery and seconded by Mr Neeson.

4.5 Update on Corporate Strategy Consultation

The Chief Executive advised Board members that 173 organisations had been invited to consult on the Corporate Strategy which was made available in a number of different formats, including Irish. The Business Planning Manager had received 38 requests for copies of the Corporate Strategy to which 6 organisations responded in writing. The Chief Executive said that copies of the responses were available for Trustees to read. Some very reasonable points had been raised with regard to ongoing issues and the Chief Executive said that these could be addressed through normal processes. He said there was nothing within the responses which required any significant changes to be made to the document.

The Board of Trustees therefore approved the formal publication of the Corporate Strategy 2006-2009 subject to the amendments to visitor figures and KPI's previously mentioned.

4.6 Development of Museum Policy for Northern Ireland

The Chief Executive referred to recent correspondence from Mr Cory, Director of Sport, Museums and Recreation at DCAL which invited comments on the draft terms of reference for the proposed development of a museums' policy. Following a brief discussion it was agreed that the Chairman would draft a response, on behalf of the Board, suggesting National Museums Northern Ireland be represented on the Steering Group. The Chief Executive also reported that the Northern Ireland Museums Council (NIMC) had received a similar letter and had proposed that both organisations seek an informal meeting with senior DCAL officials to discuss the proposal. Trustees noted NIMC's proposal.

4.7 Approval of Loans

The Chair sought the approval of the Board of Trustees for a number of loans to and from the Ulster Museum. The Committee formally approved the requests for loans (archive copies attached to minutes).

5. BUSINESS OF CHAIRMAN

Mr John Devlin

Trustees noted with regret the untimely death of Mr John Devlin who worked at the Ulster Museum and had 19 years service with the organisation. The Chairman advised Board members that she had written to John's widow, Mary, expressing the Board's sadness at John's sudden death and to extend their sympathy to the family circle.

Mrs Primrose Wilson CBE

The Chairman advised Board members that she had written on their behalf to congratulate Mrs Primrose Wilson, former Chair of the Heritage Lottery Fund in Northern Ireland, who had been awarded the CBE in the New Year's Honours List.

National Museums of Ireland

The Chairman reported that the Board of National Museums Northern Ireland had been invited to the Collins Barracks branch of the National Museums of Ireland (NMI) to view the *"Soldiers and Chiefs"* exhibition and to meet the Board and senior staff of NMI. Trustees welcomed the invitation and it was agreed that the Committee Secretary would try to co-ordinate this visit with the forthcoming opening of *"Treasures from the North"* at the National Gallery of Ireland.

6. TRUSTEES' SUB-COMMITTEES

6.1 Staffing Committee

6.1.1 Approval of minutes of meeting held on 17 October 2006

Board members approved the minutes of the meeting held on 17 October 2006.

6.1.2 Verbal report of meeting held on 15 December 2006

In the absence of the Chair of the Staffing Committee, Mr Neeson reported that the main areas of discussion at the meeting were the recruitment activity currently ongoing within the organisation as part of the reform and modernisation programme, the Ulster Museum capital development programme and the Voluntary Early Retirement (VER) scheme. The Committee was still awaiting the secondment of a full-time NIPSA section secretary. Committee members also noted that the Leadership Forum met on 17 November 2006 and discussed the capital development priorities and the Comprehensive Spending Review. Work was ongoing to develop new policies and procedures and draft grievance and draft disciplinary procedures were currently with NIPSA for consultation.

6.2 General Purposes and Finance Committee

6.2.1 Approval of minutes of meeting held on 15 September 2006

Board members approved the minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2006.

6.2.2 Verbal report of meeting held on 15 December 2006

Mrs Elliott reported that the Remuneration Committee, a sub-committee of the General Purposes and Finance Committee, had made recommendations in relation to the Chief Executive's remuneration package. These recommendations had been presented to the Board at their January meeting and subsequently submitted to DCAL for final approval.

The Committee noted and approved the Financial Reports to 30 September 2006 and received an update from the Chief Executive on the PAC Committee report on Collections Management within the National Museums and Galleries of Northern Ireland. The main decisions taken at the Board Away Day in November 2006 were recorded through the General Purposes and Finance Committee. Committee members also received updates on the capital programme update and the intended review of W5.

6.2 Audit Committee

6.3.1 Approval of minutes of meeting held on 20 October 2006

Board members approved the minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2006.

6.3.2 Verbal Report of meeting held on 26 January 2007

The Chair of the Audit Committee, Mr Harvey, reported that the Committee had approved the proposed the internal audit plan and reviewed the risk management strategy at the meeting. The principal issue which arose in relation to risk management was the Ulster Museum project. Committee members also reviewed the outstanding audit recommendations and noted that satisfactory progress had been made following the recruitment of key senior staff to the organisation. As previously minuted there was also substantial discussion of the 05/06 Annual Report and Accounts. Committee members were also advised that government would be requesting documentation much sooner which would have resource implications for the museum.

6.4 Marketing, Development and Fund-raising Committee

6.3.2 Verbal report of meeting held on 16 November 2006

At the first meeting of the new Marketing, Development and Fund-raising Committee, members discussed how they could best support the organisation and welcomed the recent appointment of the Commercial Manager, Mr Jim Berkley. A marketing plan was under development and Millward Brown had been appointed to undertake a usage and attitude survey in early spring. The Committee also discussed the development priorities identified at the Trustees' Away Day and potential fund-raising opportunities.

7. WHOWHATWHEREWHENWHY (W5)

7.1 Minutes of W5 Board meeting held on 26 September 2006

Board members noted the minutes of the W5 Board meeting held on 26 September 2006.

7.2 Minutes of W5 Board meeting held on 27 October 2006

Board members noted the minutes of the W5 Board meeting held on 27 October 2006.

7.3 Minutes of W5 Board meeting held on 23 November 2006

Board members noted the minutes of the W5 Board meeting held on 23 November 2006.

7.4 Verbal report of W5 Board meeting held on 19 December 2006 and 24 January 2007

The Chairman of W5, Dr Walker, reported that visitor figures for the current year were good with December 2006 recording the high visitor figures since the science centre opened. Dr Walker reported on additional funding which had been made available to W5 by DCAL and the proposed review of W5 both of which were discussed under "*RESERVED BUSINESS*".

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

9. DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING

The date, time and venue of the next meeting was set for Friday 4 May 2007 at 11.00 hrs in the Board Room at the Ulster American Folk Park.