

07 September 2007

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Minutes of a meeting of the Board of Trustees held on Friday, 7 September 2007, at 11.00 hrs in the Board Room at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum.

Trustees Present:

Mrs Margaret Elliott (Chairman)

Mr Dan Harvey (Vice-Chairman)

Lt Col Harvey Bicker

Dame Geraldine Keegan

Dr Alastair Walker

Mr Tom Shaw

Mr Sean Neeson

Mrs Patricia Flanagan

In Attendance:

Mr Tim Cooke (Chief Executive)

Dr Jim McGreevy (Director of Collections & Interpretation)

Mrs Jude Helliker (Director of HR & Organisational Development)

Mr John Gilmour (Director of Development)

Ms Amanda Lilley (Director of Finance & Planning)

Mr Marshall McKee (Director of Operations)

Mr Oliver McKenna (Business Planning Manager)

Ms Heather Henning (Committee Secretary)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from the following Trustees, Mrs Wendy Osborne, Mr Bill Montgomery and Miss Linda Beers and the Director of Marketing, Trading and Communications, Mrs Gillian McLean.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 4 May 2007

On the proposal of Mr Harvey which was seconded by Dr Walker, the Board approved the minutes of the meeting held on 4 May 2007.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 4 May 2007

The Chairman stated that the majority of items arising from the minutes of the meeting on 4 May would be addressed under the Business of the Executive and the remainder of the agenda.

4. BUSINESS OF THE EXECUTIVE

4.1 Executive Summary

Gilford Silent Cinema: The Chief Executive reported that Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure, Mr Edwin Poots had opened the Gilford Silent Cinema complex, at a cost of £1.2m, on 13 June 2007. The Chief Executive thanked the Development, Operations and Collections and Interpretation directorates for the successful launch of this new facility.

UlsterMuseum: The Chief Executive reported that Town Planning Committee of Belfast City Council had given its unanimous backing to the Ulster Museum's proposals having considered the objections submitted by the Ulster Architectural Heritage Society (UAHS).

The process of appointing the main contractor for the project was now complete and a formal announcement that the Patton Group had been awarded the contract would be made towards the end of the month. Contractor mobilisation was scheduled to commence on 24 September with significant work commencing at the beginning of October. It was estimated that the construction phase of the project would take 15 months followed by the fit-out of the galleries.

2005/2006 Annual Report and Consolidated Financial Statement

The Chief Executive reported that the 2005/2006 Annual Report and Consolidated Financial Statement had been published and laid before the Assembly on 5 July 2007.

W5 Review

Trustees noted that the Chief Executive had been working with PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) on both the strategic plan and governance reviews of W5. The strategic plan review, as previously reported, was complete however the final version of the governance review remained outstanding.

VER Scheme

The Director of HR & OD reported that the launch of the next phase of the VER Scheme was imminent and would be offered to the Visitor Guide staff across all the sites as they had not yet been eligible to apply for voluntary early retirement (VER). Given the large numbers of staff involved a decision had been taken to implement the third round of the scheme in three phases commencing with the Ulster Museum followed by the Ulster American Folk Park and Ulster Folk and Transport Museum later this financial year. Given the current staffing levels at the latter two sites the Executive did not anticipate large number of staff being permitted to exit under the scheme. Providing adequate funding was available, it was the intention to launch, in due course, a fourth and final "mop-up" phase of the scheme.

The Chief Executive said that the organisation was continuing to operate within a very tight financial grant-in-aid settlement from DCAL which was placing significant pressures upon the organisation and detailed the cumulative effects caused by three years of flat-line funding and the knock-on effects of the pay bill which equated to a £2.7m cut in funding. Even with a voluntary early retirement plan the organisation could not deliver those levels of savings and although self-generating income plans were being formulated they would not deliver that level of return. The National Museums group had demonstrated both internally and externally, in recent years, that it was a very progressive organisation

committed to making a real difference to public service. Furthermore the Board and Executive had demonstrated its willingness to tackle some of the hard issues it faced within the organisation however there was only so much that could be done within the current resource envelope and as the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) approached, the Chief Executive repeated his concerns regarding the museum's current financial situation and the concerns that he would have if the outcome of CSR was to be a continuing flat-line revenue situation.

The Chairman acknowledged that the business of the Board and the Audit Committee had illustrated the Chief Executive's concerns from the outset of the current of flat-line funding period and said that it was remarkable that the organisation had managed to live within the funding limits. Mr Shaw said that the Board had a duty to draw the Minister's attention to the consequences of further cuts to the museum's revenue funding which had been in two audit reports from KPMG. Following a brief discussion, Board members agreed that a letter expressing these concerns be drafted and sent to the Minister.

4.2 Business Plan 2008-09 Progress

Trustees noted that the Executive hoped to bring a draft Business Plan 2008-09 for initial discussion to the next meeting of the General Purposes and Finance Committee on 21 September 2007 with the revised document being tabled to the Board of Trustees at their meeting on 9 November 2007.

4.3 Review of Assets

Mr Harvey said that the Review of Assets Committee had visited the various sites within the National Museums Northern Ireland estate over the summer period to establish the relevant boundaries. The next step for the committee would be to engage with management to establish the future long-term needs of the organisation following which recommendations would be submitted to the Board for discussion.

4.4 Approval of Bank Mandate and Cheque Signatories

Trustees approved a revised list of cheque signatories which had been updated to reflect the new directorate structure.

4.5 Approval of Delegated Authority for Special Meeting of G P & F Committee and Audit Committee to adopt and approve 2007 Financial Statements

Trustees delegated the Board's authority to a special meeting of the General Purposes and Finance Committee and Audit Committee to adopt and approve the 2007 Financial Statements on 21 September 2007 to facilitate the earlier submission of accounts as recommended by the NIAO.

4.5 Approval of Loans

The Chair formally approved the request for a number of loans from the Ulster Museum's collection (archive copies attached to minutes).

5. BUSINESS OF CHAIRMAN

5.1 Amendment to Standing Orders

The Chairman advised the meeting that as a result of the untimely death of Professor Eithne McLaughlin and the recent retirement of Sir Kenneth Bloomfield, the Board of Trustees currently comprised eleven members. Following correspondence with the Minister, Mr Poots had indicated his preference that the Standing Orders be amended to reduce the quorum for sub-committee meetings rather than co-opt additional members.

The Chairman therefore proposed the following amendment to the Standing Orders and it was resolved that -

“Under the Museums and Galleries Order (NI) 1998 and without prejudice to the Interpretation Act (NI) 1954 the Board resolves to amend its Standing Orders relating to the quorum for sub-committee meetings of the Board from three to two until 30 June 2008”.

5.2 Smithsonian Festival 2007

The Chairman reported that National Museums Northern Ireland's exhibition and participation in the Smithsonian Festival had been very successful and demonstrated the role which museums had to play in the international promotion of Northern Ireland. The Chief Executive thanked all of the staff who participated in the event for their significant contribution which ensured the success of the National Museums Northern Ireland programme of events.

5.3 Appraisal of Trustees

The Chairman advised Board members that she hoped to complete appraisal exercise for individual Board members within the next 8-10 days.

6. TRUSTEES SUB-COMMITTEES

6.1 Staffing Committee

6.1.1 Approval of minutes of meeting held on 16 March 2007

Trustees approved the minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2007.

6.1.2 Verbal report of meeting held on 15 June 2007

The Chairman of the Staffing Committee, Mr Tom Shaw reported that the Committee received a presentation on the development of the intranet within the organisation, and updates on recruitment, capital development and the Voluntary Early Retirement scheme (VER). DCAL had requested a business case for the £2m allocated for the reform and modernisation programme and as there had been insufficient time to circulate the plan to Board members prior to its submission to DCAL, the Director of Finance and Planning and Chief Executive had discussed the proposal with the Staffing Committee and General Purposes and Finance Committee. Discussions on the organisation's structure were deferred as the Director of HR & OD had been unable to attend the meeting because of adverse weather conditions.

6.2 General Purposes and Finance Committee

6.2.1 Approval of minutes of meeting held on 9 March 2007

Trustees approved the minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2007.

6.2.2 Verbal report of meeting held on 15 June 2007

The Chairman of the General, Purposes and Finance Committee, Mrs Elliott said that the Financial Report to 31 March 2007 was discussed in some detail prior to approval. Mr Harvey suggested there may be a need to protect the reproduction rights of the collection and it was agreed this should be referred to the Audit Committee for further discussion. It was noted that DCAL had approved the Corporate Plan 2006/09 and the draft Business Plan for 07/08 and the business plan projections were discussed in light of the current restrictions on funding. The need to develop a clear commercial strategy was also

emphasised. Other topics of discussion were the review of assets, the W5 review and the transfer of Armagh County Museum following the review of public administration.

6.3 Audit Committee

6.3.1 Verbal report of meeting held on 7 September 2007

The Chairman of the Audit Committee, Mr Harvey, reported that the museum's internal auditors, KPMG, had delivered their annual report to the meeting and gave a high level of assurance of the principal areas they had audited but emphasised the need for management to ensure that staff were fully aware of the risks within their area of responsibility.

KPMG presented two internal audit reports to the Committee, namely their internal audit of the new corporate structure and their audit of corporate governance within National Museums Northern Ireland. Mr Harvey said that report on the implementation of the new corporate structure drew attention to the significant challenges which faced management in bringing about change within the organisation and recommended that this report be circulated to Board members. KPMG reported that there was a good corporate governance with National Museums Northern Ireland but recommended that the sub-committees of the Board should be producing an annual statement of their activities during the year, part of which could be incorporated into the Annual Report and Accounts. Mr Harvey was confident that this recommendation could be addressed.

Trustees noted that tenders would be invited shortly for the provision of internal audit services in line with best practice. Mr Harvey said that KPMG had provided an excellent service for the museum and commended the Director of Finance and Planning and her finance team for the preparation of the financial statements within the demanding timescale.

6.4 Marketing, Development and Fundraising Committee

6.4.1 Approval of minutes of meeting held on 15 February 2007

Trustees approved the minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2007.

6.4.2 Verbal report of meeting held on 13 June 2007

In the absence of the Chairman of the Marketing, Development and Fund-raising Committee, Ms Flanagan reported that the Director of Marketing, Trading and Communications had provided a progress report on recruitment within the Marketing, Trading and Communications division together with a detailed report on the preparations for the Smithsonian Festival in Washington DC. Mrs McLean also tabled a marketing plan for the forthcoming 6 months together with a detailed events programme to December '07. The Head of Appeals, Mr Gilmore, briefed the committee on the programme of fund-raising for the Ulster Museum project and detailed a number of other capital bids which had been submitted to DCAL. He also briefed the Committee on the launch of the gift aid scheme at the Ulster American Folk Park.

Committee members welcomed the news that the "Titanic in Belfast" website, developed by museum staff, had won three awards.

7. WHOWHATWHEREWHENWHY (W5)

7.1 Minutes of W5 Board meeting held on 27 April 2007

Trustees noted the minutes of the W5 Board meeting held on 27 April 2007.

7.2 Minutes of W5 Board meeting held on 25 May 2007

Trustees noted the minutes of the W5 Board meeting held on 25 May 2007.

7.3 Minutes of W5 Board meeting held on 22 June 2007

Trustees noted the minutes of the W5 Board meeting held on 22 June 2007.

7.4 Verbal report of W5 Board meeting held on 24 August 2007

The Chairman of W5, Dr Walker, reported that W5 had recently won the Marketing Excellence Award from the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) and the All Ireland Award for Customer Service and visitor figures had been consistently good during the summer period.

Board members noted that Dr Walker and Dr Montgomery, Chief Executive of W5 had hosted a visit to W5 by the Chairman of the Culture, Arts and Leisure Committee, Mr Barry McElduff, MLA.

The remainder of Dr Walker's verbal report was reported under "Reserved Business" as it referred to commercially sensitive information.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Mr Neeson thanked all the staff who assisted with the recent visit by the National Historic Ships Committee to the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum.

9. DATE, TIME AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Board of Trustees would be held on Friday, 9 November 2007, in the Board Room at the Administration Building at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum.