

CONFIRMED MINUTES
MEETING OF BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Friday 24 September 2021
Cultra Manor, Ulster Folk Museum & Microsoft Teams

Trustees Present:

Mr Miceal McCoy – Chairman
Ms Deirdre Devlin – via Microsoft Teams – Video Conference
Professor Garth Earls
Mr William Duddy
Professor Karen Fleming
Mrs Hazel Francey
Mrs Daphne Harshaw
Miss Charlotte Jess
Dr Rosemary Kelly
Dr Leon Litvack
Mr Alan McFarland – via Microsoft Teams – Video Conference
Dr George McIlroy – via Microsoft Teams – Video Conference
Mr William McMullan
Mrs Catherine Molloy – via Microsoft Teams – Video Conference
Dr Robert Whan

In Attendance

Kathryn Thomson, Chief Executive (CEO)
William Blair, Director of Collections (DC)
Colin Catney, Chief Operating Officer (COO)
Aaron Ward, Head of Audience Development (HAD) presented item 8.2
Michelle Ashmore, Secretariat
Jourdan Crilly, Assistant Secretariat – via Microsoft Teams – Video Conference

1. Welcome & Apologies

The Chairman formally welcomed everyone to the meeting.
No apologies were received.

2. Conflicts of Interest

The Chairman ascertained the following conflicts of interest in relation to the business as set out on the agenda:

Prof Fleming indicated a potential conflict around one of the grants being discussed agenda item 7.1 (AHRC Grants) as she is member of Ulster University staff.

3. Approval of Minutes

3.1 Minutes of Meeting held on 18 June 2021.

Trustees approved the Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 18 June 2021.

Proposed by: Dr Whan

Seconded by: Miss Jess

4. Matters Arising

4.1 Update on Actions from previous meeting held on 18 June 2021.

The CEO advised the Trustees on the summary of actions from the meeting held on 18 June 2021.

Action 1 is complete. Action 2 will be complete at the December Board meeting with a presentation on the Volunteering Strategy.

5. Business of Chairman

5.1 Business Planning Diary

The Board reviewed and agreed the schedule of proposed dates of Board Meetings to the end of 2022. The schedule of proposed dates remain on Fridays. The Chairman advised going forward Committee and Board meetings will be in person with the option to attend virtually if agreed in advance with the Chair.

5.2 Board Work Plan

The Board noted the Work Plan.

5.3 Advocacy Engagements Verbal Update

The Chairman reminded the Board that it was agreed in August 2019 that advocacy updates would be a standing item to allow Trustees to report on any recent engagements.

- Mrs. Harshaw advised that while attending the Triangle Housing Association Board she had outlined what National Museums NI could offer across all its sites to work in partnership. The information and opportunity were received with enthusiasm.
- Ms. Devlin had the opportunity at a recent event to talk with the Executive Producer of the Antiques Roadshow following recent filming carried out at the Ulster Folk Museum. The Executive Producer gave praise to National Museums NI staff and the site.

5.4 Board Self-Assessment Action Plan

The Chairman spoke to the actions agreed at the last meeting following the Board's annual self-assessment:

- Increased communication required between Trustees – the Chair noted that this first in person meeting was facilitating this;
- Wider environment engagement with other colleagues in ALBs – the Chair drew attention to the CEO engagements detailed in the report at agenda item 7.1. He also advised that he will be attending the DfC ALB Chairman's Forum which is scheduled for 5th October 2021; and,

- Development of Trustees post induction – the Chair confirmed with all new members of the Board that they had been content with their induction programme.

6. Loans & Disposals

6.1 Loans approved by GP&F

Trustees noted the loans approved by the GP&F Committee on behalf of the Board at its meeting on 21 May 2021.

6.2 Disposals for Approval

Trustees approved the Disposals for Approval as presented. Two actions were agreed:

- The DC to review the template for disposals and update as appropriate
- A presentation on the Collections Development Policy (including disposals) to be arranged for Trustees

Proposed by: Mrs Francey

Seconded by: Dr Litvack

7. Business of Chief Executive

7.1 Chief Executive's Report

The Chief Executive reviewed the above report in discussion with Trustees, commenting specifically on:

- Ulster Folk Museum – the development stage application for £12.5m grant from the NLHF Heritage Horizons Awards was unfortunately not successful. We received positive feedback that the project was assessed to have a strong vision and we have been encouraged to submit a new application to a separate NHLF Programme for a lesser amount. Meantime a funding strategy has been developed and an application submitted by Ards and North Down Borough Council (ANDBC) to the Complementary Fund (CF)
- Ulster American Folk Park – has been earmarked as a redevelopment project in the draft Mid-South Regional Growth Deal
- Ulster Museum – the Strategic Outline Case for the redevelopment of the Ulster Museum received good feedback from DfC and the development of the Outline Business Case is now being progressed
- Ulster Transport Museum – July saw the opening of the Museum of Innovation gallery at Dalcoolin, which, over the next few years, will provide further insights to the future direction of the Ulster Transport Museum
- Museum on the Move have been a real success story to come from lockdown. The programme attracted many schools whose engagement with National Museums NI had lapsed. One in five school had not participated in our programmes for more than

five years and almost one-third of schools were located in rural communities. The programme reach was representative of pupils living in areas of multiple deprivation with 9% of schools located in the top 10% most deprived areas of NI and 23% of schools located in top 20% most deprived areas. The Education team are now preparing to deliver both 'Museum on the Move' and on-site programmes during the autumn term

- National Museums NI, with academic partners from Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University, has been successful in securing AHRC funding of £79,800 to support the development of the *Bad Bridget* experience at the Ulster American Folk Park
- Following on from the weekly and monthly staff updates from the Chief Executive over the last 5 years, HR/OD has worked with Audience Development to rebrand the monthly communications into a monthly newsletter
- The consultation/negotiation process with NIPSA on aspects of new terms and conditions for new staff was concluded in May and the recruitment process for new visitor services posts across all sites commenced in August
- Estimates of visitor numbers for 2021-22 are capped at 50% of pre-Covid-19 levels, which sharply reduces capacity for self-generated income
- The forecast deficit for the year is therefore circa £2.5m. DfC are aware of this position and discussions are ongoing. A bid has been submitted to the October Monitoring Round to meet this projected shortfall and allow us to plan and invest for future periods
- Public Affairs engagement has continued over recent months. The CEO highlighted the following visits:
 - Finance Minister visit to UM
 - Economy Minister visit to Museum of Innovation at UTM
 - Communities Minister visit to launch our partnership with The Conservation Volunteers
 - Education Minister visit to a primary school to experience a Museum of the Move workshop
- A new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been established with the National Museum of Ireland (NMI) to provide a framework for cooperation and effective communication. It will also provide opportunities for the scoping of joint strategies, programmes and funding applications in response to potential opportunities

Trustees noted the report. The Chairman indicated that in the event that funds cannot be accessed, there will need to be further discussion with the Chairman for the use of (limited) Board Reserve Fund.

8. Strategic Priorities

8.1 Approach to Languages – Position Paper

The DC advised that National Museums NI is a custodian and champion of our linguistic heritage, in terms of the languages and dialects of Ulster and Ireland – notably, English, Irish and Ulster Scots – and their connections in Great Britain, surrounding islands and Europe. As well as these ‘native’ languages, new opportunities exist to celebrate the broader tapestry of linguistic diversity in Northern Ireland today associated with ethnic minority communities. The paper presented outlined National Museums NI’s commitment and actions to help progress the development and promotion of languages within our museums.

The Board approved the five commitments outlined in the paper to guide the organisations way forward in this important area.

Proposed by: Dr Litvack

Seconded by: Dr Kelly

8.2 Corporate Repositioning Plan

The Head of Audience Development presented the Corporate Repositioning Plan and advised that repositioning National Museums NI with external partners and audiences is a key Corporate Plan priority. Here For Good reminds those who may not understand us of the important and valuable role that museums can play at the heart of society.

The Board welcomed and noted the presentation.

9. Board of Trustees’ Committees

9.1 Audit & Risk Assurance Committee

9.1.1 Adoption of Minutes of ARAC Meetings held on

The Chairman of ARAC presented the minutes of 4 June 2021 meeting. Trustees adopted the minutes of the ARAC meetings of 4 June 2021.

Proposed by: Dr Litvack

Seconded by: Mrs Molloy

9.1.2 Verbal update of Meeting held on 10 September 2021

The Chairman of ARAC spoke to the note of the Committee meeting held on 10 September and highlighted the following:

- The Head of Finance and Governance took ARAC members through the Annual Report and Accounts which were presented with an unqualified opinion
- Mrs. Daphne Harshaw has agreed to serve as a nominated representative responsible for investigating staff concerns as part of the Raising Concerns (Whistleblowing) Policy and Procedure.

Trustees noted the report.

Papers arising from ARAC meeting on 10 September 2021:

9.1.3 Corporate Risk Register

The Board noted the updates to the Corporate Risk Register.

9.1.4 Bi Annual Assurance Statement

The BiAAS covers the period to the end of September 2021 and is due with the Department by 18 October 2021. The BiASS was reviewed by ARAC at its meeting on 11 September 2021 and is recommended to the Board. The Chair indicated that a comment be added to his sign off section regarding the financial position and forecast deficit.

9.1.5 Draft Report to Those Charged With Governance

The CEO advised the draft Report To Those Charged With Governance was reviewed by ARAC at its meeting on 11 September 2021. The final report will be presented at Board meeting in December 2021.

The Board approved the papers:

Proposed by: Dr Litvack

Seconded by: Mrs Molloy

Policies for Approval from ARAC on 10 September 2021

9.1.6 Risk Management Framework

9.1.7 Raising Concerns (Whistleblowing) Policy and Procedure

The Board approved the policies:

Proposed by: Dr Litvack

Seconded by: Mrs Molloy

9.2 General Purposes & Finance Committee

9.2.1 Adoption of Minutes of GP&F Meeting held on 21 May 2021

The Chairman of GP&F presented the minutes of the GP&F meeting. Trustees adopted the minutes of the GP&F meeting of 21 May 2021.

Proposed by: Dr Whan

Seconded by: Professor Fleming

9.2.2 Verbal update of Meeting held on 27 August 2021

The Chairman of GPF spoke to the note of the Committee meeting held on 27 August and highlighted the following:

- GPF Committee welcomed new Trustee Mr William McMullan
- Business Performance Report was greatly received in its new format

- NIPSA letter was reviewed and it was agreed that a response would be sent from the Chairman of the Board
- Update on picture charge policy was presented
- A detailed report was presented by the COO on Health and Safety Performance for Q1 and the continued response to COVID
- Annual report on loans was approved on behalf of the Board

Papers arising from GP&F meeting held on 27 August 2021:

9.2.3 Performance Reports:

a) Financial Performance

The Board noted the Financial Performance Report.

b) Business Performance Report

The Board noted the Business Plan Performance Report.

9.2.4 For Approval:

a) Collections Information & Access Policy

The Board approved the policy:
 Proposed by: Dr Whan
 Seconded by: Professor Fleming

10. FOIs

The Board noted the FOI report.

11. Any Other Business

None noted

13. Date of Next Meeting

The Chairman advised Trustees that the next meeting of the Board would take place on 10 December 2021.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 13:12.

Signed:

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Date:

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Copies:
Actions

DfC, Trustees, File, Website