

CONFIRMED MINUTES
MEETING OF BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Friday 26 March 2021
Microsoft Teams, Video conference call

Trustees Present:

Mr Miceal McCoy – Chairman
Professor Garth Earls – Vice Chairman
Ms Deirdre Devlin
Mr William Duddy
Professor Karen Fleming
Mrs Hazel Francey
Mrs Daphne Harshaw
Miss Charlotte Jess
Dr Rosemary Kelly
Dr Leon Litvack
Dr George McIlroy
Mrs Catherine Molloy
Dr Robert Whan

NATIONAL MUSEUMS NI:

Kathryn Thomson, Chief Executive (CEO)
Colin Catney, Chief Operating Officer (COO)
Tzvetelina Bogoina, Capital Programmes Director (CPD) Item 8.4
Aaron Ward, Head of Audience Development (HAD) Item 8.4
Michelle Ashmore, Secretariat

1. Welcome & Apologies

The Chairman formally welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised that the meeting is being held virtually:

- Members to mute microphones unless speaking
- If anyone leaves the meeting they must advise Chairman of this to enable it to be recorded in the minutes.

Apologies were received from:

William Blair
Mr Alan McFarland

8.4 Ulster Folk Museum103 Redevelopment – Update and Next Steps

The CEO invited the CPD and HAD to provide a presentation to the Board on the planning and development update of the Transforming the Ulster Folk Museum: A People's Project.

Progress continues to be made in progressing plans for the redevelopment of the Ulster Folk Museum. The development stage application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund was

submitted at the end of February. This represented a culmination of two years of work which ranged from master-planning the site through to establishing a new vision, a deep consideration of audience trends, audience development and reigniting the Museum's sense of purpose.

The CEO also thanked the HAD who played a significant role along with the COO in the development of the Corporate Strategy.

The Board noted the update presentation.

2. Conflicts of Interest

The Chairman ascertained that there were no conflicts of interest in relation to the business as set out on the agenda.

3. Approval of Minutes

3.1 Minutes of Meeting held on 11 December 2020

Trustees approved the Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 13 December 2020.

Proposed by: Dr Litvack

Seconded by: Ms Devlin

4. Matters Arising

4.1 Update on Actions from previous meeting

The CEO advised the Trustees on the summary of actions from the meeting on Friday 11 December 2020 which had all been completed with a Special Board meeting arranged for Friday 2 April 2021.

5. Business of Chairman

5.1 Board Work Plan

The Board noted the Work Plan approved in December 2020, which has now been updated to March 2022.

5.2 Trustee Insights and Intelligence

Trustees shared relevant insights and intelligence.

6. Loans & Disposals

No loans were presented for approval.

7. Business of Chief Executive

7.1 Chief Executive's Report

The CEO began by reflecting on an unprecedented year, how it had affected the organisation, how the organisation had responded and the positive story it had to tell. The CEO said how extremely proud she was of how the organisation has survived over the past year and continued to deliver across the breadth and depth of its operations. She highlighted some significant achievements and expressed her personal thanks to the executive and senior management teams for their support, commending their leadership and resilience. She finished by thanking the Chairman and Board for their support and encouragement throughout the year.

The CEO highlighted the following in the report:

- Throughout the year a long term focus has remained on progressing the redevelopment plans for each of the four museums – application submitted to NLHF’s Heritage Horizon Awards for UFM; the Strategic Outline Case (SOC) being drafted for the redevelopment of Ulster Museum; and, Museum of Innovation concept is being tested at the Transport Museum and installation is underway;
- National Museums NI has been shortlisted for the John Ellerman Foundation’s Museums and Galleries Fund 2021 and a second stage application is being submitted;
- Funding has been secured from the Tourism NI Experience Development Programme to progress our partnership with Portview Trade Centre and support development of two exhibition spaces – the ‘Banana Block’ and the ‘Spinning Memories’ – and associated education, volunteering and events programming;
- The team on which National Museums NI is part of (alongside partners such as Nerve Centre, Oliver Jeffers, Microsoft Ireland and Queen’s University Belfast) has been commissioned as one of 10 projects for further development for Festival 22;
- *Quiet* by James (Jacques) Joseph Tissot (1836-1902) has been formally allocated to National Museums NI through the Acceptance in Lieu Scheme and, as a hybrid acquisition, supported with funding from the National Heritage Memorial Fund, the Art Fund, and the Department for Communities;
- Virtual Staff Conference to take place on Monday 29th and Tuesday 30th March; and,
- Museum on the Move relaunched on Monday 22nd March and is now booked out until the end of June and operating a waiting list.

The Board noted the report.

8. Strategic Priorities

8.1 Corporate Strategy 2021-2025

The CEO presented the final draft of the Corporate Strategy 2021-2025 to the Board for approval. This strategy provides National Museums NI with a clear direction for the next 5 years set within a broader framework of outcomes aimed ultimately at securing the relevance and sustainability of the organisation over the coming decades.

The initial draft was reviewed by the Board at its last meeting in December 2020. Feedback has been incorporated and consultation with DfC completed. The final strategy is presented for approval.

The Board commended and approved the Corporate Strategy 2021-2025.

Proposed by: Dr Kelly
Seconded by: Professor Fleming

8.2 Draft Business Plan 2021-2022

The COO advised that work on the draft Business Plan for 2021-2022 is well progressed. It is the first Business Plan arising from the new Corporate Strategy 2021-2025. The report presented included the key activities aligned to each of the strategic commitments and aims.

The next step is develop activities aligned to the enablers, interdependencies, priorities and an overarching set of KPIs. The final business plan will be presented to the Board in June.

The Board approved the key activities as the basis for the Business Plan 2021-22.

Proposed by: Dr Litvack
Seconded by: Ms Devlin

8.3 Draft Budget 2021-22

The CEO advised that the NI Executive have indicated that 2021-22 will be another 1 year budget period. We have not yet had confirmation from DfC of our opening allocation however for planning purposes we have been advised to plan on the basis of the same allocation as the beginning of last year.

The Board noted the papers presented, the financial challenges facing the organisation, and the increasing reliance on in year allocations to ensure a breakeven position at the year end. Over the last year there have been positive discussions with DfC to develop a shared understanding of the position.

The Board noted the papers and ongoing engagement with DfC and also give their full support to the Executive Team in relation to these discussions.

9. Board of Trustees' Committees

9.1 Audit & Risk Assurance Committee

9.1.1 Adoption of Minutes of [ARAC] Meeting held on 29 November 2020

The Chairman of ARAC presented the minutes of the November meeting.
Trustees adopted the minutes of the ARAC meeting of 27 November 2020.

Proposed by: Dr McIlroy
Seconded by: Mr Duddy

9.1.2 Verbal update of Meeting held on 12 March 2021

The Chairman of ARAC updated on meetings held on 12 March and highlighted the following papers that were discussed – NIAO Audit Strategy, Bi-Annual Assurance Statement, Annual Assurance Statement, Anti-Fraud Policy and Fraud Response Plan and Gifts and Hospitality Policy.

Trustees noted the ARAC Chairman's Summary of the meeting held on 12 March 2021.

Papers arising from ARAC meeting of 12 March 2021:

- 9.1.3 Corporate Risk Register**
- 9.1.4 NIAO Audit Strategy**
- 9.1.5 Bi-Annual Assurance Statement**
- 9.1.6 Annual Assurance Statement**
- 9.1.7 Anti-Fraud Policy and Fraud Response Plan**
- 9.1.8 Gifts and Hospitality Policy**

In relation to the Annual Assurance Statement, the Chairman noted his concern at the challenges associated with the budgetary allocation as well as no allowance for revenue maintenance costs. He assured the CEO that the Executive Team had the Board's full support regarding this. The Chairman asked that the Annual Assurance Statement be updated to reflect this.

All of the above ARAC papers and policies were approved by the Board of Trustees.

Proposed by: Dr McIlroy
Seconded by: Mrs Molloy

9.2 General Purposes & Finance Committee

9.2.1 Adoption of Minutes of GP&F Meeting of 13 November 2020

The Chairman of GP&F presented the minutes of the November meeting.
Trustees adopted the minutes of the GP&F meeting of 13 November 2020.

Proposed by: Ms Devlin
Seconded by: Dr Whan

9.2.2 Verbal update of Meeting held on 26 February 2021

The Chairman of GPF updated on meetings held on 26 February and highlighted the following:

- Business Plan, Financial Performance, HR & OD, and Healthy and Safety Performance reports;
- Social Media Policy, Equal Opportunities Policy, Complaints Policy and Fire Safety Policy recommended for Board approval;
- Presentation by Head of Collections Services on the Collections Access Plan;
- Annual Report on Loans

Trustees noted GP&F Chairman’s Summary of the meeting held on 26 February 2021.

Papers arising from GP&F meeting held on 26 February 2021:

9.2.3 Performance Reports:

- a) **Financial Performance**
- b) **Business Plan Performance Report**

The Board noted these reports

Policies for Approval

- 9.2.4 Social Media Policy**
- 9.2.5 Equal Opportunities Policy**
- 9.2.6 Complaints Policy**
- 9.2.7 Fire Safety Policy**

The above policies were approved by the Board of Trustees.

Approved by: Professor Fleming

Seconded by: Mrs Harshaw

10. FOIs

The last FOI requests were reported to the Board in December 2020, since then there have been no AQW’s and three FOI requests.

11. Any Other Business

No items were raised.

12. Date of Next Meeting

The Chairman advised Trustees that the next meeting of the Board would take place on Friday 18 June 2021.

The Chairman then asked if the CEO, COO and Secretariat could leave the meeting to enable Trustees to have a closed discussion on a Trustee complaint.

During the closed meeting The Chairman of the Board outlined the context of a Trustee complaint regarding a blog published in October 2020 and informed Trustees of all investigations which had been undertaken. The Internal Auditors conducted an independent examination and found that the claims were unfounded, highlighting that there was no process to investigate Trustee complaints.

Actions

11	Appreciation and thanks to be passed on to all staff on behalf of the Board of Trustees for their work and achievements during a challenging year	CEO
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