

**CONFIRMED MINUTES
MEETING OF BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

Friday 24 March 2023
Cultra Manor, Ulster Folk Museum & Microsoft Teams

Board Members Present:

Mr Miceal McCoy – Chairman
Ms Deirdre Bryce
Mr William Duddy
Professor Karen Fleming
Mrs Hazel Francey
Mrs Daphne Harshaw
Miss Charlotte Jess
Dr Rosemary Kelly
Dr Leon Litvack
Mr Alan McFarland
Dr George McIlroy – via Microsoft Teams
Mr William McMullan
Mrs Catherine Molloy
Dr Robert Whan – joined the meeting at 12.06pm during item 8.2

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 (HOAD) – item 8.2
Jourdan Crilly, Secretariat

Closed Meeting of the Board

Agenda item:

To receive report from Hearing Committee

The Board of Trustees convened to receive the Hearing Committee report on the Trustee Complaint of 9 December 2022. The Chairman of the Board of Trustees of National Museums Northern Ireland (NMNI) reported that agreement had been reached, and Trustees unanimously agreed to note the decision.

1. Welcome & Apologies

The Chairman formally welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from Professor Garth Earls.

2. Conflicts of Interest

The Chairman ascertained 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 9 December 2022.

Trustees approved the Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 9 December 2022.

Proposed by: Dr Kelly

Seconded by: Professor Fleming

4. Matters Arising

4.1 Update on Actions from the previous meeting held on 9 December 2022.

The Chairman advised that actions from the meeting held on 9 December 2022 have been completed.

5. Business of the Chairman

5.1 Board Work Plan

The Board noted the Work Plan.

5.2 Board Member Insights and Intelligence

The Chairman advised that he had attended the recent NI Leadership and Governance Conference. Members had no further insights to report.

5.3 Raising Concerns/Whistleblowing

The Chairman advised that the Board had been asked to confirm that it is content to provide the necessary assurances to DfC on the basis of the response submitted by the Chief Executive on 24th February.

Proposed by: Dr Litvack

Seconded by: Mrs Bryce

The Chairman of the Board of Trustees informed the meeting that Mrs Bryce would undertake the position of Vice Chairman of ARAC.

6. Loans & Disposals

6.1 Loans approved by GP&F

Members noted the loans approved by the GP&F Committee on behalf of the Board at its meeting on 24 February 2023.

7. Business of Chief Executive

7.1 Chief Executive's Report

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

Building Museums of the Future

- **Ulster Folk Museum** – The Outline Business Case for the Reawakening project was formally submitted to DfC in December 2022. In order to pursue further third-party funding opportunities the project is required to have secured planning permission or be well underway with the planning process. A Planning Application Notice has been submitted and the 12 week consultation process is underway. The aim is to submit the planning application by the end of June.
- **Ulster American Folk Park** – The draft Strategic Outline Case (SOC) for the redevelopment project has been completed and submitted to the MSW Deal Project Management Office (PMO) and Tourism NI for formal feedback. It is due to be finalised in April/May 2023.
- **Ulster Museum** – Unfortunately our application to the Levelling Up Fund for capital investment in Phase 1 of the project was unsuccessful on the basis that as an ALB, National Museums NI was ineligible to apply – our charity status was not deemed relevant. Work to progress the masterplan for the museum continues internally in terms of programming and prototyping of new engagements and better use of available spaces.
- **Ulster Transport Museum** – Our Place in Space (OPIS) sculpture trail was installed in the museum grounds and officially opened to the public at the end of February 2023. Capital investment has delivered new signage and pathways, infrastructure for food trucks, access to the Walled Garden for an event, and access to the coastal path for the first time.

Exhibitions and Events:

- The installation of the Turner Prize-winning artwork *The Druthaib's Ball* by the Array Collective at the Ulster Museum.

Publications:

- National Museums NI is about to publish its first catalogue dedicated to its comprehensive and internationally significant collection of Troubles artworks, authored by Kim Mawhinney, Senior Curator of Art.
- On 15th March, the Northern Ireland launch of the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland's (BSBI) *Plant Atlas 2020* was hosted by National Museums NI at Cultra Manor.

Collecting:

- National Museums NI has been successful in its efforts to secure the acquisition of the Renoir landscape, *L'allée au bois* (The Woodland Path).
- A George Cross medal was presented to the National Health Services in each of the four nations. The medal for the HSC in Northern Ireland has now been donated to the Ulster Museum by the Department for Health. It can be seen on display in *Pandemics Past & Present* within the Modern History gallery.

Collections Access:

- The library refit in the Administration building at Cultra has been completed and is now open to the public. The new CMS/DAMs, CollectionsIndex+ has been launched alongside the Collections Online portal on the website.

Other highlights included:

- Following the Final Grant in Downpatrick Court, February 2023, McCuskers Pub will be operating for Easter.
- Overall visitor numbers are well up against the target for 2022-23 and we are nearing pre-Covid numbers.
- The composite staff engagement score from the most recent 'Pulse Survey' was 74.7%, up from 71.6% from the last time.
- The fourth Staff Conference was held on 7 March. The Conference was designed and delivered by a cross-functional steering group of colleagues from across the business and saw a welcome return to an in-person format. It was very encouraging to see all of our teams back together, with many people meeting for the first time.
- Additional in year funding was secured from DfC in December to meet the forecast deficit.

Members commended the Chief Executive on such a comprehensive report.

8. Strategic Priorities

8.1 a) Draft Business Plan & Budget 2023-24

Proposer by: Dr Leon Litvack

Seconded by: Mrs Molloy

8.1 b) National Museums NI Draft Budget Forecast 2023-24

The CEO advised that while we haven't yet been notified of our allocation by DfC, our working assumption is that we will have the same opening baseline as last year. On that basis the Board noted the forecast deficit for 2023-24 which is a result of pressures faced in payroll and energy costs, on top of the historical structural underfunding that has been met through in year monitoring for a protracted number of years.

The Board placed on record its ongoing concern that the structural underfunding has not been addressed on a recurring basis and the unsatisfactory nature of ongoing reliance on in year monitoring to balance the annual budget. The Board also wished to record its commendation of the resilience of the organisation, its commitment to success and continued and consistent delivery of positive impacts in its work. This demonstrates a very strong return on investment of public funds.

Proposer by: Dr McIlroy

Seconded by: Mrs Bryce

8.2 One Programme Plan

The Head of Audience Development (HOAD) took the Board through a presentation outlining the progress achieved through the One Programme Plan. The HOAD advised that National Museums NI is blessed with a diverse portfolio of museums and collections and has many opportunities to engage with a wide range of audiences. The challenge with this diversity, however, is that it can be difficult to achieve clarity and cohesiveness.

The *'One Programme Plan'* is a strategic initiative that for the past four years has attempted to coordinate the sheer diversity of the many opportunities to engage our audiences. It derives its name from its ambition to ensure that everyone in the organisation has a common understanding of our approach to audience engagement in any given year, thus forming a key organisational tool for improved teamwork and internal communication – as well as underpinning all of our marketing and communications planning and activity.

Since August 2022, teams across the organisation have been engaged in collaborative conversations to develop a coherent and compelling plan for engaging our audiences in the upcoming financial year. This year's plan is built around the Audience Framework and prioritises programming opportunities at each museum according to its strategic context and development journey.

Members commended the progress that has been made and noted the report.

9. Board of Trustees Committees

9.1 Audit & Risk Assurance Committee

9.1.1 Adoption of Minutes of ARAC Meetings held on 25 November 2022

The Chairman of ARAC presented the minutes of the ARAC meeting. Members adopted the minutes of the ARAC meeting on 25 November 2022.

Proposed by: Dr Litvack

Seconded by: Mrs Molloy

9.1.2 Verbal update of Meeting held on 8 March 2023

The Chairman of ARAC provided a verbal update on the Committee meeting held on 8 March 2023.

The Board noted the report.

Papers arising from the ARAC meeting on 8 March 2023

The following papers were recommended for Board approval:

9.1.3 Corporate Risk Register

9.1.4 NIAO Audit Strategy

9.1.5 Bi-Annual Assurance Statement

Proposed by: Mrs Molloy

Seconded by: Miss Jess

9.1.6 Annual Assurance Statement

Proposed by: Mrs Harshaw

Seconded by: Dr Rosemary Kelly

9.2 General Purposes & Finance Committee

9.2.1 Adoption of Minutes of GP&F Meeting held on 11 November 2022

The Chairman of GP&F presented the minutes of the GP&F meeting. Members adopted the minutes of the GP&F meeting on 11 November 2022.

Proposed by: Professor Fleming

Seconded by: Ms Bryce

9.2.2 Verbal update of Meeting held on 24 February 2023

The Chairman of GPF provided a verbal update on the Committee meeting held on 24 February.

The Board noted the report.

Papers arising from the GP&F meeting held on 24 February 2023:

9.2.3 Performance Reports:

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

The Board noted the Financial Performance and Business Plan Performance Reports.

9.2.4 For Approval:

The following policies were recommended for approval:

- a) Staff Code of Conduct
- b) Safeguarding Policy
- c) Exhibition Policy

The policies were approved by the Board.

Proposed by: Miss Jess

Seconded by: Mr Duddy

10. FOIs

The Board noted the FOI report.

11. Any Other Business

The CEO noted that this was the last Board Meeting for the Chairman and nine Members whose term finishes at the end of April. The CEO reflected on what the organisation has achieved over the last 10 years thanking those Members leaving for their contribution, support, guidance, advice and challenge throughout their term.

13. Date of Next Meeting

The Chairman advised Members that the next meeting of the Board would take place on 16 June 2023.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 12.50pm.

Signed:

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Chelle Juss

Date:

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16/6/23