

**CONFIRMED MINUTES
MEETING OF BOARD**

**Friday 22 September 2023
EY, Bedford House, Belfast**

Members Present:

Ms Charlotte Jess – Vice-Chair
Mr William McMullan
Dr Robert Whan

National Museums NI Attendance:

Kathryn Thomson, Chief Executive (CEO)
Colin Catney, Chief Operating Officer (COO)
William Blair, Director of Collections (DC)
James Lewsley, Head of Finance & Governance (HFG)
Michelle Ashmore, Secretariat

External Audit Attendance:

Ms Pauline Gilmore, NIAO – items 10.1 and 10.2 (via Microsoft Teams)
Ms Christine Hagan, ASM – items 10.1 and 10.2 (via Microsoft Teams)

Internal Audit Attendance:

Ms Pauline Poots, Head of Internal Audit, EY – item 10.3

1. Welcome & Apologies

The Vice-Chair formally welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were received:

Mrs Deirdre Bryce
Mr William Duddy

2. Conflicts of Interest

The Vice-Chair 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 Board Meeting held on 16 June 2023

Members approved the Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 16 June 2023

Proposed by: Ms Jess
Seconded by: Mr McMullan

4. Matters Arising

4.1 Update on Actions from the previous meeting held on 16 June 2023

The Chief Executive (CEO) advised that actions from the meeting held on 16 June 2023 have been completed and that the invite for the Permanent Secretary to join the Board meeting had been pushed back to December.

5. Business of the Chairman

The Vice-Chair reminded the Board that the agenda represented a combination of the Committee and Board meetings scheduled for the quarter in lieu of the current constitution of the Board.

6. Loans & Disposals

6.1 Loans for Approval

The CEO advised that a decision has been made to charge entry into the *Lavery on Location* exhibition when it goes on display in the Ulster Museum next year. This is in line with the other venues in Dublin and Edinburgh which will charge an entry fee.

The Board approved the Loans for Approval as presented.

Proposed by: Ms Jess

Seconded by: Mr McMullan

7. Business of Chief Executive

7.1 Chief Executive's Report

The Chief Executive (CEO) reviewed the above report in discussion with Members, commenting specifically on the following:

- **Ulster Folk Museum** – there has been significant progress made in the last quarter with a major funding application submitted to Peace Plus. The evaluation and award process will now take up to 26 weeks. Concurrently, an application to proceed to National Lottery Heritage Fund's delivery stage of the project is due for submission by 31st March 2024. In terms of the planning application, an indicative date of December 2023 has been scheduled to bring the application through council committee for approval;
- **Ulster American Folk Park** – it has been confirmed that DfC will be the lead Department for the redevelopment project. Feedback is awaited from relevant approving parties on the draft Strategic Business Case (SOC);
- **Ulster Museum** – following a procurement exercise, The Liminal Space have been appointed as the designers for the 2023-2024 prototyping project and work has commenced;
- **Exhibitions and Events** – the inaugural 'Making Festival' in partnership with Construction Industry Training Board NI (CITB NI) was successfully delivered at Ulster

Folk Museum. The two-day event celebrated traditional crafts and supported the continued revival of our most cherished heritage skills. The event achieved a Net Promoter Score of 89.6, which is an exceptionally high score;

- **Programming Highlights** – the Cultra Motorsport Festival returned on 10th June attracting over 3,000 visitors. Following the PPE the event has been approved for next year, but will be aligned to Ulster Transport Museum’s programming;
- **Budget** – engagement with DfC on the budget forecast is ongoing. A copy of the latest paper submitted was shared with the Board;
- **Global Voices Local Choices** – with the workshop phase of the project now at an end, the partners are organising a showcase event at Stormont and have also been shortlisted at the Museums Association (MA) awards, the winner will be announced at the MA Conference in November.

Members noted the report.

8. Strategic Priorities

None were considered under the current arrangements.

9. Performance Management

9.1 Business Plan Performance Report Q1

The CEO advised that it was quite a detailed report that represented an exceptionally strong start to the year. In particular the April – August visitor numbers are 15% ahead of the same period last year and performance continues ahead of the target of first time and lapsed visitors. This is being driven by strategic development, including the One Programme Plan and marketing and communications.

After discussion, Members noted the report.

9.2 Financial Report Q1

The Head of Finance and Governance (HFG) took Trustees through the funding position and the management accounts, noting that the deficit projected within the 2023/24 draft Business Plan was unchanged at the end of Q1. Engagement continues with the Department at various levels to address the issue.

Members noted the summary.

9.3 Corporate Risk Register Q1

The HFG advised members that there has been one update since last quarter.

Members noted the report.

9.4 Health & Safety Performance Report Q1

The Chief Operating Officer (COO) presented the report which was noted by members.

10. Governance

10.2 Annual Report and Accounts 2022/23

The HFG took Members through the final Annual Report and Accounts 2022/23 which were presented for approval.

The CEO commended the HFG and his team for all their hard work on the annual report and accounts in getting to this stage.

The report and accounts were approved by Members.

10.3 Draft Report to Those Charged With Governance

Ms Christine Hagan from ASM took Members through the full report, highlighting actions for ARAC on page 3 which have been agreed. Ms Hagan also highlighted section 3 regarding significant risks and advised there were no issues identified as part of the audit and that no additional significant risks were identified during our audit fieldwork. Ms Hagan also advised there were 3 audit findings which have all been accepted by management.

The CEO thanked Christine and her team and ASM for all their hard work on this report.

The report was approved by Members.

Proposed by: Dr Whan

Seconded by: Mr McMullan

10.3 Draft Internal Audit Plan

The Head of Internal Audit took members through the plan advising key aspects of the plan and also highlighting key areas.

The plan was approved by Members.

Proposed by: Ms Jess

Seconded by: Mr McMullan

11. FOIs

The Board noted the FOI report.

12. Any Other Business

None noted.

13. Date of Next Meeting

The Vice-Chair thanked Members and attendees, drew their attention to the date of the next meeting – 8 December 2023 – and closed the meeting at 12.01pm.

Signed:

Charlie Jess

Date:

15 / 12 / 23

Copies:

DfC, Trustees, File, Website