

**CONFIRMED MINUTES  
MEETING OF BOARD**

**Tuesday 30 January 2024  
Learning Zone, Ulster Museum**

**Members Present:**

Gordon Milligan – Chair  
Keith Charlton  
Ryan Cornett  
William Duddy  
William McMullan  
Peter Osborne  
Therese Rafferty  
Fiona Ryan  
Mark Walker

**National Museums NI Attendance:**

Kathryn Thomson, Chief Executive (CEO)  
Colin Catney, Chief Operating Officer (COO)  
William Blair, Director of Collections (DC)  
Aaron Ward, Director of Public Engagement (DPE)  
Hannah Crowdy, Head of Curatorial (HC)  
Cailín Lynn, Programming Development Manager (PDM)  
Michelle Ashmore, Secretariat

**1. Induction**

**1.1 Apologies**

The Chair formally welcomed everyone to the meeting. The Chair advised members that the agenda for the day was structured as part induction process. He advised that the Executive Team have been robust with the induction programme they have put in place. He also reminded Board members of the next induction session which is taking place on 22 February with a focus on public sector accountability and governance.

Apologies were received from:

Charlotte Jess  
Sally Montgomery  
Robert Whan

**1.2 Conflicts of Interest**

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

### **1.3 Approval of Minutes from Last Meeting**

Members approved the Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 15 December 2023.

### **1.4 Matters Arising from Previous Meeting**

The Chief Executive (CEO) advised that actions from the meeting held on 15 December 2023 will be addressed at the March's Board meeting.

The Chair noted an additional action that hadn't been included regarding a future presentation by EY of their work on Cultra Manor.

## **2. Chair & Chief Executive Business**

### **2.1 Chair & Trustee Business**

The Chair advised that he and a few of other Board members recently attended the Ulster Scientist Trust Awards held in the Ulster Museum. He encouraged Board members to attend events where possible and also noted the Lavery on Location opening which is taking place on 22 February in the Ulster Museum.

The Chair also advised Board members that he and the CEO recently met with the Permanent Secretary and Assistant Permanent Secretary regarding our budget and that he felt it was a positive and encouraging discussion.

### **2.2 Chair Executive Report**

The CEO provided a verbal update from the Chief Executive report highlighting the following:

- **Reawakening the Ulster Folk Museum** – A&NDBC granted full planning approval in December. The next steps are realizing the funding strategy, updating the OBC and submitting to DfC for approval and finalizing the procurement strategy.
- **Christmas** – extensive programme of events at the outdoor museums where the footfall was up 26% year on year for December and visitor feedback was very strong;
- **North South Bodies Exhibition** – we are currently hosting an exhibition to mark 25 years of the work of the North South Bodies. The opening event was last week and well attended by government representatives and those who have been involved in this work since their inception.

Members noted the report.

## **3. Performance Review**

### **3.1 Budget Update**

The CEO advised regarding the meeting that she and the Chair had with Permanent Secretary and Assistant Permanent Secretary on 17th January where we had an opportunity to clearly outline our position and how it has arisen over recent years. The Permanent Secretary requested more detailed financial information and some comparative benchmarks for analysis. A response is currently being collated.

The CEO also advised that the Department has approved a cash drawdown to pay the February payroll. This will result in a forecast overspend at the year end. The Finance team are continuing to work closely with the Department to monitor and manage this to the year end. The CEO advised that she would keep Board members updated on this situation.

Members noted the update.

#### **4. Performance Review**

##### **4.1 Collections Development**

The Director of Collections (DC) advised that collections development is key to fulfilling National Museums NI's strategic ambitions. It enables us to develop audiences and relationships, underpins our credibility and helps to grow our reputation, locally, nationally and internationally.

The Head of Curatorial (HC) gave a presentation on collections development and the key issues relevant to the Board.

The HC advised that in line with recent guidance from the Museums Association, it is recommended that authority for some collection disposals be delegated to senior management. This would bring disposals in line with acquisitions. Only high value acquisitions are brought to the Board for approval, with responsibility for other acquisitions delegated to relevant senior management and the Chief Executive. It is recommended that this principle be extended to disposals, with only complex disposals with a significant risk profile being brought to the Board for consideration.

The Board approved the proposed delegated responsibility for approving the transfer, reuse and disposal of collections and the Chair requested for the process to be added to the collections development policy as an annex.

The CEO also advised that once the new disposals process was up and running, we would ask internal audit to review as part of their future work programme.

The Chair left the meeting at 11.47am to attend another event. In the absence of the Vice Chair, the Chair of ARAC chaired the remainder of the meeting.

##### **4.2 One Programme Plan**

The Programming Development Manager (PDM) presented the outline One Programme Plan for each museum, complemented by HC, who explained the processes for exhibition planning, highlighting successes of the exhibition programme over the last twelve months and introduced some exciting new plans for the future that are currently in discussion and development.

Members noted the presentation.

**5. Governance**

**5.1 Verbal update from ARAC**

The Chair of ARAC spoke to the note of the Committee meeting held on 24 January 2024 and highlighted the following:

- Reviewed two Internal Audit Reports – an advisory audit on Governance arrangements; and, assurance review of compliance with statutory responsibilities within Curatorial. The latter had a satisfactory rating but highlighted the need to build expertise and capacity within archaeology for the assessment and recording of Treasure finds; and,
- The Annual Report & Accounts have been published and laid in the Assembly.

**5.2 Loans, Acquisitions, Disposals**

The Board approved the Loans for Approval as presented.

**5.4 FOIs**

The Board noted the FOI report.

**6. Any Other Business**

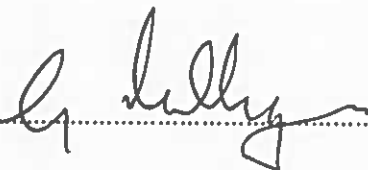
None noted.

The site based team at the Ulster Museum joined to meet the Board and the General Manager provided a short 5 minute overview presentation.

**7. Date of Next Meeting**

The ARAC Chair thanked Members and attendees, drew their attention to the date of the next meeting – 19 March 2024 – and closed the meeting at 12.50pm.

Signed:

  
.....

Date:

19/3/24  
.....

Copies:

DfC, Trustees, File, Website