

**CONFIRMED MINUTES  
MEETING OF BOARD**

**Thursday 9 May 2024  
Training Room, Cultra Manor**

**Members Present:**

Gordon Milligan – Chair  
Keith Charlton  
Ryan Cornett  
William Duddy  
Charlotte Jess  
William McMullan  
Therese Rafferty  
Fiona Ryan  
Mark Walker  
Robert Whan

**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)  
Mark Irvine, Head of Operations (HO)  
Michelle Ashmore, Secretariat

**1. Induction**

**1.1 Apologies**

The Chair formally welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were received from:

Sally Montgomery  
Peter Osborne

**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 19 March 2024.

**1.4 Matters Arising from Previous Meeting**

The Chief Executive (CEO) advised that actions from the meeting held on 19 March 2024 have been completed. The CEO also advised that actions outstanding from the January Board meeting would be brought to future Board meetings as and when appropriate.

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

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

The Chair provided members with a verbal business update:

- The Executive Team have begun the process of developing the strawman for the next Corporate Strategy in preparation for the workshop taking place on 29<sup>th</sup> August. Stakeholder Management and Corporate Risk will also be key themes for discussion. The Chair advised that along with the CEO he met with senior DfC officials on 21 March 2024 to further discuss the budget;
- Minister Gordon Lyons visited both UTM and UFM, where we presented the plans for Reawakening project and facilitated a walk around the museum;
- On Saturday 4 May 2024 at the Bluegrass Festival in UAFP there was an opportunity to engage with local stakeholders;
- The stakeholder event for the opening of Caravaggio takes place at UM this evening and confirmed guests include Ministers (north and south), elected representatives, senior civil servants and business leaders; and,
- Meetings for annual appraisals for Board members to be scheduled before the summer break.

### **2.2 Chair Executive Report**

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

- We closed out end of March 2024 with 720,000 visitors which is 12% up year on year;
- Lavery on Location is performing well and to target – retail is particularly strong;
- Close to the year-end DfC confirmed an in year allocation to meet the forecast deficit. In addition a further allocation was made to cover the anticipated pay award. As a result a breakeven is forecast for the year end;
- Revenue – we have been given an allocation to cover the first 3 months of 2024-25 in lieu of budgets being agreed by the Department. Following the information provided last month there has been no further indication as to what we might expect to receive; and
- Capital – we have not yet been given any capital allocation. The latest information is that DfC do not have sufficient funds to cover inescapable and tail end projects at this stage. This will have significant implications for us, particularly in terms of the programme of works underway at UM which is impacting on the visitor experience.

Members noted the report.

## **3. Performance Review**

Scheduled for Quarterly Meetings Only (March, June, September & December)

## **4. Performance Review**

#### **4.1 Asset Management Strategy Presentation**

The Chief Operating Officer (COO) advised that this strategy covers the period 2022-27 and is the organisations second such document, the first being the Estate Strategy 2018-21. It contains a delivery plan of 40 individual actions covering the six guiding principles laid out within it.

The Head of Operations (HO) gave a presentation outlining progress in implementation of the strategy to the Board.

Members noted the presentation.

#### **4.2 Reawakening the Ulster Folk Museum**

The DPE provided a presentation on the plans for Reawakening. Following the Board Meeting members were taken on a walk around the museum and Project Hub to further talk through and orientate to the plans.

### **5. Governance**

#### **5.1 DfC Partnership Agreement**

The CEO advised The Partnership Agreement is a formal document which governs the relationship and engagement between National Museums NI and the Department for Communities and the delegated limits under which we can operate.

The agreement will replace the Management Statement and Financial Memorandum (MSFM) that was last updated in 2015. The governing documents and relationships are intended to be reviewed annually, however, whilst this document has been sitting as a 'work in progress' since 2019/20, the annual review of the MSFM has not been conducted.

Members approved for the Partnership Agreement to proceed.

#### **5.2 Budget Update**

The CEO advised this verbal update was covered in item 2.2.

#### **5.3 Loans, Acquisitions, Disposals**

None for approval.

#### **5.4 FOIs**

The Board noted the FOI report.

### **6. Any Other Business**

The Chair advised that a meeting will take with EY to discuss the Board Effectiveness Review to then be brought to Board in June.

### **7. Date of Next Meeting**

The Chair thanked Members and attendees, drew their attention to the date of the next meeting – 25 June 2024 taking place in the Ulster American Folk Park – and closed the meeting at 12.00noon.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'h. duffy', written over a horizontal dotted line.

Date:

A handwritten date '25/6/24' in black ink, written over a horizontal dotted line.

Copies:

DfC, Trustees, File, Website