

**CONFIRMED MINUTES
MEETING OF BOARD**

**Thursday 28 January 2025
Training Room, Cultra Manor**

Members Present:

Gordon Milligan – Chair
Keith Charlton
Ryan Cornett
William McMullan
Sally Montgomery
Peter Osborne
Shane Quinn
Therese Rafferty
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)
Brona Moffett, Head of Experience and Enterprise Development (HEE) – agenda item 4.2
Michelle Ashmore, Secretariat

External Attendance:

Pauline Poots, Head of Internal Audit, EY – agenda item 2.2

1. Induction

1.1 Apologies

The Chair formally welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were received from:

Charlotte Jess
Fiona Ryan

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 10 December 2024.

1.4 Matters Arising from Previous Meeting

The Chief Executive (CEO) advised that the outstanding action from the November 2024 meeting and actions from the meeting held on 10 December 2024 have been completed. The CEO also advised that actions outstanding from the January 2024 Board meeting would be brought to future Board meetings when appropriate.

2. Chair & Chief Executive Business

2.1 Chair & Trustee Business

The Chair advised members that engagements are continuing to take place given the financial challenges we are facing. It is important that we build strong relationships and that conversations continue to take place in a positive way. He also advised of a potential trip to Washington with CEO in March. The Chair reported that he had a very positive meeting with Anna Carragher, Chair of Friends of the Ulster Museum.

In advance the Chair thanked the Board members that had joined the Commercial Task and Finish Group, the output of which would be presented today. He also welcomed Pauline Poots, Head of Internal Audit, EY who joined the meeting to present the proposed new Board Effectiveness Model plan.

The Chair passed on his thanks on behalf of the Board to the huge effort of the Issues Management Team who had dealt effectively with the impacts of Storm Eowyn.

2.2 Board Effectiveness Review Action Plan

As part of the Board's ongoing development, EY facilitated an Effectiveness Review in June 2024 culminating in a workshop feedback session at the Board meeting in November 2025. Pauline Poots took Board members through the proposed next steps in developing a process and framework to govern the Board's development programme over the coming years. The framework will be presented at the next Board meeting in March.

The Chair thanked Pauline for her presentation.

2.3 Chair Executive Report

The CEO provided a verbal update from the Chief Executive report with the below highlights:

- **Reawakening the Ulster Folk Museum** – The updated Outline Business Case was formally re-submitted to DfC yesterday. Next steps are to prepare for the procurement of the ICT and then procurement of the contractor (subject to project approval). The NLHF Board meeting is in early June and will consider our application at that point. We are working closely with senior DfC officials to ensure that a Ministerial decision is taken before that point;
- **PEACE Plus Application** - We submitted an appeal on the feedback received and met recently with the appeal panel. No outcome has been received as yet;

- **Corporate Strategy 2025-2030** - The public consultation process launched at the beginning of January and will run to 2nd March. Formal launch of the Corporate Strategy is due to take place in April 2025;
- **Ulster American Folk Park** - The MSW Growth Deal have advised that the OBC is to be submitted by March 2026. We are currently in discussions with DfC and FODC to secure the funding support required to procure the ICT and develop the OBC; and,
- **Budget 2024-25** – A number of in year inescapable pressures have arisen amounting to circa £500k and we are liaising with DfC officials seeking to secure an additional in year monitoring allocation. The in year position has been extremely challenging to manage – given that budgets were held at last year’s out turn pending completion of the independent financial review, there was no contingency to manage emerging in year pressures.

Members noted the report.

3. Performance Review

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

4. Performance Review

4.1 Draft Business Plan 2025-26

The Chief Operating Officer (COO) advised that the draft Business Plan has been developed to deliver on year 1 of the draft Corporate Strategy 2025-2030. Key to our approach has been translating the overarching strategic direction into a 5 year view of strategic activities for each museum and then detailed 1 year plans by museum. We are proposing that our business planning process is managed in a flexible manner enabling us to adapt more flexibility on an ongoing basis to our changing world.

The Chair thanked the SMT for pulling together the plan. Board members approved the draft Business Plan 2025-26 for further refinement with the final draft including the budget to be brought to the next Board meeting in March.

4.2 Commercial Task & Finish Group – Final Report

The Chair welcomed Brona Moffett, Head of Experience and Enterprise Development (HEE) to the meeting.

Keith Charlton, Chair of the Task & Finish Group advised that members met four times to evaluate the current commercial activities across all four sites and have developed a plan that sets direction for the next 5 years. He thanked all those involved in the task and finish group for their work.

Aaron Ward, Director of Public Engagement and Brona Moffett presented an outline of the four prioritised ambitions which National Museums NI will take forward.

Members noted the presentation and agreed that an update on the progress of the report would be provided to the Board annually.

5. Governance

5.1 Loans, Acquisitions, Disposals

The Board approved the loans for as presented.

The Director Collections (DC) recommended the following disposal:

- Disposal of the Mary Joseph, with ethical deconstruction.

Members approved the disposals as presented.

5.2 Repatriation Proposal

The DC recommended the following Repatriation proposal:

- Hawaiian ancestral human remains, at the request of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs.

Members approved the repatriation as presented.

5.3 Collections Development Policy

The DC advised that the Collections Development Policy reviewed and updated on a cyclical basis. The most recent review and update is presented to the Board for approval.

Members approved the Collections Development Policy.

5.4 Ethics Policy

The DC advised that the Ethics Policy is reviewed and updated on a cyclical basis. The most recent review and update is presented to the Board for approval.

Members approved the Ethics Policy.

5.5 FOIs

The Board noted the FOI report.

6. Any Other Business

None noted.

7. Date of Next Meeting

The Chair thanked Members and attendees, drew their attention to the date of the next meeting – 25 March 2025 and closed the meeting at 12.27pm.

Signed:



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Date: 25 March 2025

Copies: DfC, Trustees, File, Website