

**CONFIRMED MINUTES
MEETING OF BOARD**

**Tuesday 13 May 2025
Training Room, Cultra Manor**

Members Present:

Gordon Milligan – Chair
Keith Charlton
Ryan Cornett
Charlotte Jess
Sally Montgomery
William McMullan
Peter Osborne
Shane Quinn
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) – agenda item 4.2
Katherine McClean, Built Heritage & Capital Projects Manager (BH&CPM) – agenda item 4.3
Michelle Ashmore, Secretariat

External Attendance:

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

1. Introduction

1.1 Apologies

The Chair formally welcomed everyone to the meeting.

There were no apologies.

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 25 March 2025.

1.4 Matters Arising from Previous Meeting

The Chief Executive (CEO) advised that three actions from the last meeting were work in progress and one item was complete. The action regarding the Business Plan from January 2025 is being carried forward pending final approval of the plan. 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 that one to one annual appraisals meetings are currently taking place with Board members in which he welcomes the conversations and direct feedback. Any meetings still to be arranged would be finalised this week.

The Chair also passed on his congratulations to William McMullan who has accepted the opportunity to serve a second tenure as a Trustee.

The Chair noted his concern at more Board members appearing to be experiencing issues with IT access and advised them to contact the secretariat to enable the problem to be rectified as quickly as possible.

The Chair advised that positive engagement is continuing with DfC regarding the budget and capital allocation for 2025/26.

The Chair also advised that the Corporate Strategy 2025-2030 was formally launched by the Minister at an event in the Ulster Museum. The Chair passed his thanks onto Board members who attended to support this event.

2.2 Board Effectiveness Review

As part of the Board's development, EY carried out an Effectiveness review in June 2024 culminating in a workshop feedback session at the Board meeting in November 2024.

It was agreed that a more effective and dynamic Board development process should be designed that offered Trustees a process less reliant simply on a questionnaire, with a move to a workshop, discussion, and review process.

The Head of Internal Audit took members through the design of the proposed development framework with good discussion taking place with members regarding the next steps to progress the framework and proposal for a workshop to take place.

The Chair thanked Pauline for her presentation.

It was agreed that the Chief Executive (CEO) and Chair would reflect on the recommendations suggested by members in finalising an agenda for the proposed workshop.

2.2 Chair Executive Report

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

- **Reawakening the Ulster Folk Museum** – The Outline Business Case continues to move through the review and approval process in DfC. The next stage is the Casework Committee, after which it is recommended to the Minister. This stage needs to have completed for the NLHF application process to proceed. The NLHF Board meeting to consider our application is in early June. We continue to work closely with senior DfC officials to ensure that a Ministerial decision is taken before that point.
- **Budget 2025-26**
 - **Revenue** – following the independent financial review last year we have welcomed an indicative opening allocation that largely addresses the structural underfunding. Setting a final budget for the year will now be progressed and the final Business Plan & Budget 2025-26 presented to the next meeting for approval
 - **Capital** – we have received an indicative opening allocation of circa £3m. This is very welcome and will allow some key projects to progress.

Board members passed their appreciation for the support in reaching this conclusion.

- **Corporate Strategy** – this was successfully launched at the Ulster Museum at the beginning of last month. The Minister formally launched the strategy and the event was opened by the Lord Mayor of Belfast. It was well attended by a wide range of partners and stakeholders as well as colleagues representing teams from across the organisation.
- **Repatriation of Hawai’ian Ancestral Remains** - Following approval by the Board we facilitated the repatriation of ancestral remains in a ceremony at the Ulster Museum. We were pleased to be able to share the event with the media and attract significant positive PR coverage.

Members noted the report.

3. Performance Review

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

4. Strategy

4.1 Collections Development Annual Update

The Director of Collections (DC) presented an annual update on collections development highlighting key acquisitions and disposals over the last year.

The Chair thanked William for his presentation.

4.2 Asset Management Strategy

The Asset Management Strategy 2022-2027 was presented to the Board in May 2024 containing a delivery action plan. The Head of Operations (HO) presented an outline of progress at the end of Year 3 of the five year strategy.

The Chair thanked Mark for the presentation.

4.3 Conservation of Heritage Buildings

As a key risk in the risk register, ARAC previously received a detailed presentation on the condition and management of the built heritage estate – primarily the exhibit buildings at UFM and UAFP.

On the recommendation of ARAC this was escalated to the Board and the Built Heritage & Capital Projects Manager presented an update on the current condition of built heritage estate and risks being carried.

Members noted the significant risk being carried and the urgent need for investment to address this area. Members also raised their concerns regarding the timeliness with which CPD can support delivery of vital work in this area, and the risk to being able to spend the full capital allocation this year as a result.

The Chair thanked Katherine for her presentation.

5. Governance

5.2 Loans, Acquisitions, Disposals

None for approval.

5.3 FOIs

The Board noted the FOI report.

6. Any Other Business

The Chair advised that the next Board meeting would take place at the Ulster American Folk Park followed by a stakeholder lunch.

7. Date of Next Meeting

The Chair thanked Members and attendees, drew their attention to the date of the next meeting – 24 June 2025 and closed the meeting at 12.50pm.

Signed:

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Date:

.....24/6/25