

**CONFIRMED MINUTES
MEETING OF BOARD**

**Tuesday 11 November 2025
Training Room, Cultra Manor**

Members Present:

Gordon Milligan – Chair
Ryan Cornett
Charlotte Jess
William McMullan
Sally Montgomery
Peter Osborne
Therese Rafferty
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)
Susan Starrett, General Manager at UFM/UTM – agenda item 4.1
Hannah Crowdy, Head of Curatorial – agenda item 4.2
Jenny Haslett, Education Manager – agenda item 4.2
Michelle Ashmore, Secretariat

External Attendance:

Pauline Poots, Head of Internal Audit, EY – agenda item 2.3

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Apologies

The Chair formally welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were received from:

Keith Charlton
Shane Quinn
Fiona Ryan
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 16 September 2025.

1.4 Matters Arising from Previous Meeting

The Chief Executive (CEO) advised that actions from meeting held on 16 September 2025 were complete.

2. CHAIR & CHIEF EXECUTIVE BUSINESS

2.1 Chair & Trustee Business

The Chair thanked members for completing their Board self-assessments 2024/25 to enable a facilitated workshop to take place on 27 January 2026. Pauline Poots, Head of Internal Audit, will join today's meeting to take members through the results and feedback from the self-assessments.

The Chair advised there would be two presentations taking place focusing on Reawakening in action at the Ulster Folk Museum and an overview of Education at National Museums NI.

The Chair also advised that stakeholder engagements continue to take place and will be covered in more detail in the CEO Report.

2.2 Schedule of Matters

A previous Working Group of the Board led the most recent annual review of the Board Operating Framework in August 2022. This Framework includes the Schedule of Matters Reserved to The Board And Scheme Of Delegation.

The Framework has recently been reviewed and some minor updates and amendments proposed.

Members approved the Schedule of Matters with slight amend to be made on page 6.

2.3 Board Self-Assessment

Following discussion at previous meetings, EY facilitated the completion of the same board effectiveness questionnaire as that used in 2024.

Pauline Poots presented the results and feedback from the 2024/25 Board Self-Assessment. The data from this questionnaire will now form an input to a facilitated Board Development Workshop scheduled for the 27 January 2026. The outcome of this will be an Action Plan.

The Chair thanked Pauline for the presentation.

2.4 Chair Executive Report

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

- **Reawakening the Ulster Folk Museum** – In June the national NLHF Board approved the award of £10m to the project. This is conditional on the rest of the funds being secured by the deadline of 31st December 2025.

The Outline Business Case was considered by a Casework Committee on 8th October and it is expected that recommendations will be presented to the Minister imminently.

- **The Journey Ahead - Ulster American Folk Park** – The tender process for the integrated consultancy team is nearing conclusion. This will allow work to commence to inform the OBC which has a target for submission by the end of March 2026.

The Minister hosted a 3-day visit from the US250 Commission, which included a visit to UAFP as part of the programme. As well as a tour of the museum, the formal signing of the MOU between DfC and the US250 Commission, and a commemorative tree planting took place.

The Chair passed on his thanks to the team at the Ulster American Folk on behalf of the Board for their support with the visit of the US250 Commission.

- **Ulster Museum** – Following successful recruitment and in-housing of the current contract, 24-hour security at UM will begin on 17th November.



- **Condition of Thatch** - The condition of the thatch on a number of exhibit buildings has deteriorated significantly over recent months. The tender had initially been issued in January this year however following a challenge CPD suspended the appointment of a contractor. The process of resolving the issue has been protracted and we have had no means by which to maintain thatch in the interim. Last month CPD agreed a way forward and tenders have begun to issue and will be awarded on a cottage-by-cottage basis pending a more effective longer-term solution. It is hoped that urgent repair works will therefore begin in the next couple of months.
- **Staff Conference** - The Staff Conference on 30th September was attended by over 300 and was extremely successful. The evaluation confirmed that over 80% of attendees were satisfied, with the highlight being the keynote presentation by Sharon Ament, Director London Museum. The Minister also joined and presented during the day.

Members noted the report.

3. PERFORMANCE REVIEW

Not applicable – scheduled for Quarterly Meetings Only (March, June, September & December)

4. STRATEGY

4.1 Spotlight on Business Plan – Reawakening in Action

Alongside our new Corporate Strategy 2025-2030 we have introduced new ways of planning and working across National Museums NI. One of the key changes is that we have introduced Site-Specific Business Plans within the Annual Business Plan 2025-26 so that each museum has a clear set of five-year aims and annual activities.

Susan Starrett, General Manager at UFM and UTM presented an insight into how this site-specific planning and delivery process has been rolled out at the Ulster Folk Museum.

The Chair thanked Susan for an informative presentation.

4.2 Overview of Education Programme at National Museums NI

National Museums NI delivers a highly rated and award-winning education programme that reaches almost 50,000 learners every year.

Jenny Haslett, Education Manager, presented an overview of the education programmes, describe their impact and explore future developments and ambitions for education at National Museums NI.

The Chair thanked Jenny for an informative presentation.

5. GOVERNANCE

5.1 Loans, Acquisitions, Disposals

The Board approved the loans as presented.

5. FOIs

The Board noted the FOI report.

6. Any Other Business

None.

7. Date of Next Meeting

The Chair thanked Members and attendees, drew their attention to the date of the next meeting – 16 December 2025 – and closed the meeting at 12.34pm.

Signed:



Date:

16/12/25

Copies: DfC, Trustees, File, Website