

**CONFIRMED MINUTES
MEETING OF BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

**Tuesday 27 January 2026
Training Room, Cultra Manor**

Members Present:

Gordon Milligan – Chair
Keith Charlton
Charlotte Jess
William McMullan
Sally Montgomery
Peter Osborne (via MS Teams)
Shane Quinn
Therese Rafferty (via MS Teams)
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) (via MS Teams)
Aaron Ward, Director of Public Engagement (DPE)
James Lewsley, Head of Finance and Governance (HFG)
Brona Moffett, Head of Experience and Enterprise Development (HEE) – agenda item 4.2
Michelle Ashmore, Secretariat

1. Induction

1.1 Apologies

The Chair formally welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were received from:

Ryan Cornett
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 16 December 2025.

1.4 Matters Arising from Previous Meeting

The Chief Executive (CEO) advised that the action from the November 2025 meeting would be covered in her CEO report update at the meeting.

2. Chair & Chief Executive Business

2.1 Chair & Trustee Business

The Chair passed on his congratulations to the CEO and Executive Team on the fantastic news regarding the secured funding package for the Reawakening the Ulster Folk Museum project. The CEO responded with thanks to the Chair and Board members for their support throughout the process.

The Chair highlighted the continuing budget challenges we are facing.

The Chair noted the Board Effectiveness workshop taking place after today's meeting which will be independently facilitated and represents a good opportunity for Board members to discuss developing their roles further and how we generally continue focus on the development of the board's effectiveness.

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 Outline Business Case received final approval and confirmation of DfC funding prior to the NLHF deadline of 31st December. There were no conditions attached. This is significant strategic milestone and, having already secured full planning approval, means that the project can now move to delivery.
- **The Journey Ahead – Ulster American Folk Park** – We are still preparing to reissue the tender for the ICT. In lieu of this we have secured some technical support through SIB to progress the early RIBA stages to inform the development of the OBC. This is to be submitted by end of June 2026.

We secured additional funding of £50k from DfC for 2026/27 to deliver a specific programme for US-NI 250 and the 50th anniversary of the Folk Park.

- **Ulster Museum** - The RUA exhibition has closed and the galleries are being prepared for the installation of Ashes for Fashion which opens at the end of February.
- **Revenue Budget 2025-26** – The CEO updated the Board on the actions that have been taken to manage the forecast overspend reported at the last meeting.

It was also highlighted that in recent discussions with the Department that we could submit an in year bid to cover any projected shortfall with a high likelihood that this will be met by the year end. The situation will continue to be monitored closely, and where possible any emerging surpluses used to reduce future year commitments before the year end.

- **Christmas 2025 Performance** - Both of the outdoor museums had extremely successful Christmas programmes. Overall, both UFM and UAFP achieved strong growth for Christmas compared to last year.

Members noted the report and passed their congratulations onto staff for such a strong Christmas 2025 performance.

3. Performance Review

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

4. Performance Review

4.1 Reawakening the Ulster Folk Museum - Update

Following approval of the OBC and announcement of the funding package last week the Director of Public Engagement (DPE) presented members with an update of the project along with proposed next steps.

Members have also been provided with a copy of Communications Toolkit which is a summary of key messages and core information to ensure communications are aligned, consistent, and effective.

Members thanked the DPE for his detailed presentation.

4.2 Commercial Task & Finish Group – Progress Update

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

A Commercial Trading Strategy 2022–2027 was approved by the Board in March 2022. Last year, following a review of this strategy and commercial priorities through a Board Task & Finish Group, a report was produced which recommended a series of prioritised actions across five key areas.

The DPE and HEE presented members with an update on the actions taken on these priorities, the progress made and the next steps in their development.

Members welcomed the detailed presentation and commended significant progress in a year.

5. Governance

5.1 Loans, Acquisitions, Disposals

The Board approved the loans as presented.

5.2 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 – 24 March 2026 and closed the meeting at 12.05pm.

Signed:


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Date:

24/3/26
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Copies:

DfC, Trustees, File, Website