CONFIRMED MINUTES
MEETING OF BOARD

Tuesday 12 May 2026
Training Room, Cultra Manor

Members Present:
Gordon Milligan – Chair
Keith Charlton
Ryan Cornett
Charlotte Jess
William McMullan
Peter Osborne
Shane Quinn
Therese Rafferty
Mark Walker
Robert Whan

National Museums NI Attendance:
Kathryn Thomson, Chief Executive (CEO)
William Blair, Director of Collections (DC)
Aaron Ward, Director of Public Engagement (DPE)
Conor McCrory, Director of Capital Programme (DCP)
Mark Irvine, Head of Operations (HO) – agenda item 4.2
Michelle Ashmore, Secretariat

1. Introduction

1.1 Apologies
The Chair formally welcomed everyone to the meeting especially Conor McCrory, Director of Capital Programme (DCP) who was attending his first Board meeting.

Apologies were received from:
Colin Catney
Sally Montgomery

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 24 March 2026 subject to one amendment raised by Keith Charlton.

1.4 Matters Arising from Previous Meeting
The Chair advised that actions from the last meeting are complete.

2. Chair & Chief Executive Business

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2.1 Chair & Trustee Business

The Chair thanked members for their support in concluding their one-to-one annual appraisals meetings which were very productive. He advised the Fiona Ryan has resigned from the Board for professional reasons and passed his thanks on to her for her contribution. The Chair is currently engaging with DfC regarding a replacement.

The Chair also advised that he had an introductory meeting with DfC's Acting Director of Culture, which included a discussion regarding the ongoing financial challenges we are currently experiencing.

2.2 Board Effectiveness Review Action Plan

Following the Board's self-assessment of its performance in November 2025, a facilitated workshop was held in January 2026. The report from the workshop was presented at the last Board meeting and circulated for comment prior to developing the action plan.

The Chair discussed the action plan with members, who subsequently approved the actions. It was also agreed that the action plan will be reviewed every 6 months.

In addition, best practice recommends an external review of Board Effectiveness every 5 years. It was recommended and agreed that an external review of board effectiveness is conducted during 2026/27.

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** – Following procurement the ICT was appointed at the end of April. The successful tender was AtkinsRealis PPS Ltd. Further details will be covered in the presentation on Major Capital Projects later in the meeting. In addition, the "permission to start" letter has been received from NLHF.

- **The Journey Ahead – Ulster American Folk Park** - Work to develop the OBC is progressing well with additional technical support from SIB.

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- **DfC ALB Forum** - The Department convenes a meeting of its ALB Chairs & CEOs twice a year. The most recent meeting in April was the first for the new Permanent Secretary.

Members noted the report.

3. Performance Review

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

4. Strategy

4.1 Management of Major Capital Project

As requested at the last Board meeting, Director of Capital Programme (DCP) gave an overview presentation of the process and stages to managing major capital projects as well as an update on the programme governance arrangements and delivery approach for the major investment projects.

The Chair thanked Conor for his presentation.

4.2 Revenue Maintenance Programme

This presentation was given to ARAC at its meeting of 9 March 2026, outlining an escalating corporate risk that 'the maintenance requirement of our estate is not sufficiently supported through the revenue budget allocation leading to a deterioration of assets'.

Mark Irvine, Head of Operations presented to the wider Board of Trustees to inform them of the current status and pressure on revenue maintenance budget and its associated risks.

Members noted their deep concern regarding the lack of revenue maintenance for our built estate leading to ongoing deterioration and negative impact on the visitor experience.

The Chair thanked Mark for the presentation.

4.3 Organisational Structure Update

The CEO presented an update of the upcoming changes to the senior structure of the organisation to support delivery of the major capital investment programme. She further updated on where the additional posts in the agreed funding packages will be integrated into the organisational structure to ensure aligned delivery.

Members noted the update.

5. Governance

5.1 Board Reserve Fund Bid – UTM School Bursary Scheme Pilot

The Director of Collections advised the reserve fund bid seeks Board approval for funding of a pilot project to provide funded transport for schools visiting the Ulster Transport Museum.

Over two years we will test and evaluate running a funded transport scheme for schools to one museum. Gaining insights into the feasibility and effectiveness of such a scheme will help inform future practice, with a view to seeking corporate sponsorship to enable the wider roll out of such a scheme in the longer term.

Members approved the UTM School Bursary Scheme Pilot Board reserve fund bid.

5.2 Loans, Acquisitions, Disposals
None for approval.

5.3 FOIs
The Board noted the FOI report.

6. Any Other Business

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7. Date of Next Meeting

The Chair thanked Members and attendees, drew their attention to the date of the next meeting – 23 June 2026 and closed the meeting at 12.32pm.

Signed: ....

Date: 23 June 2026

Copies: DfC, Trustees, File, Website