

**DORNOCH HERITAGE SCOTTISH CHARITABLE INCORPORATED ORGANISATION
(DHSCIO)**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES, HELD ON 11TH JULY
2019**

PRESENT ~ Jerry Bishop (Chair), Tony Rundle (Secretary/Treasurer), Alison Davies, Brian Munro, Elizabeth Oakes and Andrew Senior.

IN ATTENDANCE ~ Peter Wild [and Felix Spittal (DTAS) for item 1 only]

1. EXTENSION PROJECT ~ UPDATE

Members considered a report setting out the present position regarding the Museum Extension project, which included a note of the meeting held on 26th June between the Chairs of the Board and Museum Committee, and representatives of Highland Council (HC). In this connection, the Chair introduced Felix Spittal (FS) from Development Trusts Association Scotland (DTAS), who was attending the meeting in an advisory capacity.

The HC had assessed the Museum site at an open market value of £9,300, but had regarded the SCIO as a 'special purchaser' which had the effect of increasing the valuation to £240,000. The SCIO's valuation was £5,000.

JBi stated that there was considerable doubt over the HC's classification of the SCIO as a 'special purchaser', particularly having regard to the considerable amount of money invested in the Museum over the years by its members. TR suggested that the future use of the site could be protected by imposing a restrictive covenant, and JBI stated that this had been discounted by HC. FS observed that it was evident that the SCIO was a community-orientated organisation, and was, therefore, very unlikely to enter into any speculative transactions involving the Museum land. He also commented that, with regard to Community Asset Transfer negotiations, it was extremely unusual for the respective parties' valuations to be so far apart. AD remarked that it had been evident, at the June meeting, that the HC was an unwilling seller, and FS advised that, as part of the CAT process, the land-owner had to state valid reasons for refusing to sell e.g. land being currently used to provide a council service. He suggested that, initially, the SCIO make an offer based on the site's open market value, supported by evidence of the benefit to the local community. JBi advised him of the overwhelming support for the expansion of the Museum, and the purchase of the site, which had been expressed in a recent consultation exercise. AD referred to the potential benefit to the local community of the availability of additional meeting facilities.

Concern was expressed about a possible reduction in momentum, should the purchase negotiations prove to be protracted, and that it was essential for the process to be kept moving.

Reference was also made to the fact that that the Museum site was classified by HC as 'alienable', and that the HC's stated policy was to treat alienable land in the same way as any other council asset. However, it was apparent that there was an unshakeable, albeit informal, HC policy to safeguard Common Good Land.

FS advised members that the most effective course of action was to proceed with the various courses of action together. The Chair thanked him for his advice.

It was **agreed** that ~

- a) a formal offer be made to HC for the acquisition of the Museum site in the sum of £9,300, such offer to include a detailed rebuttal of HC's classification of the SCIO as a 'special purchaser';
- b) the Scottish Land Fund be asked to what extent it can fund this purchase;
- c) in the event of the offer at a) above being refused, enquiries be made as to the possible availability of alternative financing from the Dornoch Common Good Fund, whilst continuing with the existing lease from HC;
- d) in the event of the grant at c) above being refused, a further offer be made to HC under the provisions of the Community Asset Transfer process.
- e) the action being taken by the SCIO be appropriately publicised in its members' newsletter.

2. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 25TH APRIL 2019

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 25th April 2019 were confirmed as a correct record. The Chair referred to the classification of 'Friends' which had been agreed at the April meeting, and it was **agreed** that TR and PW investigate how this might be developed further.

3. FINANCE:

- a) Annual Accounts 2018/19: TR tabled copies of the Statement of Balances, and the Amalgamated SCIO Accounts, both of which had been under preparation at the time of the April meeting. It was **agreed** that the Chair be authorised to sign off the accounts, and that JBi and TR be authorised to make any necessary arrangements to submit the accounts for examination.
- b) Finance Summaries: TR circulated summaries of the current financial position of the Museum and the Heritage Society. The Chair submitted comparative museum admission figures which showed that footfall had increased by 17% compared to the same period in 2018 and income by 9%. Members also noted information on the various projects being undertaken by HL.

4. POLICY REVIEWS:

- a) Further to minute 5 of 25th April, consideration was given to up-dates of the Museum's Access and Absence Policies, which had been carried out by BM and AS respectively. It was **agreed** that, subject to certain amendments suggested at this meeting, the revised policies be formally adopted.
- b) Salvage Plan ~ Review: It was **agreed** that this matter be considered at the next meeting of the Board.
- c) Policies to be reviewed: It was **agreed** that BM and AS carry out revisions of the Disciplinary & Grievance, and Complaints & Feedback Policies respectively.

5. COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- a) Historylinks Museum: AD stated that Board members had received minutes of the most recent meeting of the Museum committee. In this connection, she reported that the proposed meeting with Estelle Quick was being re-arranged.
She reported that work was now under-way to progress the Longhouse Project, and the post of Project Manager would be advertised in the near future. Funding applications in respect of Phase Two (Excavation) of this project would be prepared over the winter period.
The Young Curators Club had now closed for the school holidays, and would re-convene when schools re-opened in August. Current attendees had asked if they could re-join, and the up-coming P5 class would also be included. Club projects included the making of a

film based on the Janet Horne story. Visits to Brora Heritage, and a metal detector outing were planned.

The final touches were being made to the McCulloch Memorial, with painting being undertaken by volunteers recruited by the Curator. Interpretation boards were planned for this project, and also for the labyrinth.

BM reported that he was in discussion with a representative of the local Fire Brigade regarding the loan of a number of photographs on display in the Fire Station, for possible copying by the Museum.

b) Dornoch Heritage Society: PW reported that the next meeting of the DHS committee would be held on 15th July. The most immediate matter for discussion would be attendance at the Sutherland Show (20th July) for which a number of volunteers would be required.

He stated that he was researching appropriate photographs for a display marking the 20th anniversary of HL, and was also drawing up a draft list of speakers for the winter season of Society talks. Potential subjects included Lumberjacks in WW2 Scotland, Telford churches in the Highlands, Rosemarkie, Flying Boats in Shetland, and Corrugated Iron Buildings in the Highlands. With regard to the calendar of talks, it was **agreed** that one of these be combined with the SCIO's Annual General Meeting.

Other events planned were Film Night (13th December) and the annual Burns Night dinner (24th January 2020).

6. MEMBERSHIP: TR reported on applications for membership of the SCIO, received since the April meeting of the Board. It was **agreed** that the applications be approved, and it was noted that the current membership stands at 207 [Full 161, Associate 38, and Honorary 8] together with two Friends.

7. PAINTINGS: It was noted that two oil paintings, of Queen Victoria (old Council Chamber) and of John Sutherland (Golf Club) were possible artefacts which might be displayed in an extended Historylinks Museum.

DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS: Board ~ Friday 30th August 2019 at 2 p.m.

Annual General Meeting ~ provisionally Thursday 10th October 2019 at the Social Club.