

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF
THE DORNOCH HERITAGE SCOTTISH CHARITABLE INCORPORATED ORGANISATION
(DHSCIO)
HELD ON 29TH OCTOBER 2025**

- 1. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS:** Andrew Senior welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- 2. MEMBERS PRESENT:** Sheila Anderson, Jane Armstrong, Jerry Bishop (Treasurer), Joan Bishop, Anne Coombs, Alison Davies (Co-Chair), Gordon Davies, Ann Duce, Wilf Hadley, Richard Hickson, Laura Kasim, Jim MacPherson, Fiona McKinlay, Heather Martin, Graeme Muckart, Tessa Palmer, Andrew Senior (Co-Chair), Lorna Senior, John Sutherland, Judi Sutherland, Peter Wild. In attendance: Lynne Mahoney (Historylinks Museum Curator).
- 3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Anthea Ballantyne, Jill and John Barnes, Eilidh Paterson, Sally Wild.
- 4. MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON 17TH OCTOBER 2024:** The minutes were proposed, seconded and accepted as a correct record of the meeting. There were no matters arising.
- 5. BOARD MEMBERSHIP:** Andrew Senior and Jerry Bishop retired as Elected Charity Trustees. Two new Board members, Mrs Tessa Palmer, a Financial Analyst, and Dr Jim MacPherson, UHI, were proposed and subsequently elected by the meeting.
- 6. ANNUAL REPORT 2024/25 and CHAIR'S UPDATE:** Alison Davies informed the meeting that the annual report dating to 31/3/25 had already been submitted.

There have been many highlights over the last year or so. First and foremost, after 6 years of planning, construction and design, the Heritage Hub extension was formally opened by Lord Thurso on 5th April, 2025. This wonderful space provides great opportunities for broadening the scope of our activities. There was a series of winter weekend openings to welcome visitors to view panels from the Spirit of the Highlands and Islands Tapestry Project which the museum had on loan from Inverness Castle Museum. Our own local Dornoch Stitchers have produced 3 panels for display. There will be a winter opening programme in the winter of 2025/26 also.

The extension of the archive storage facility is complete. We now have 6 mobile shelving units which will provide plenty of storage space for some years ahead. John Barnes and his archiving team were thanked for all their hard work.

The Young Curators' Club continues to be a great success with 12 or more children attending every meeting. Since it started 5 years ago, 80 children have attended and we are pleased to see other museums following suit in providing similar activities.

The constitution has been amended in two ways. Firstly, the Dornoch Heritage SCIO is now named Dornoch Heritage Society. We have an excellent Board and two sub committees – the Museum Committee and our fundraising committee. The latter has since changed its name to Friends of Dornoch Heritage Society to avoid any confusion. Secondly, the constitution was amended to allow admission to international members.

We have a new Business Plan written by Jerry Bishop and Richard Hickson. It will be revised annually. It is essential that we increase footfall to the museum and so we will focus on marketing activities in this respect. This year, we welcomed cruise line passengers from Invergordon who enjoyed a joint visit to the Cathedral and Historylinks. This initiative has been very successful and we will continue with it next year.

Museum Galleries Scotland has approved our recent submission to continue as an accredited museum for a further 5 years. This is the result of a significant amount of work by Lynne Mahoney, our curator, to whom our thanks is extended.

The museum was visited recently by Donald Ross's great niece, Jane McElligott, who lives in Canada and who has kindly donated five of her great uncle's golf clubs to our collection. Her visit and gift were covered by local newspapers and Jane has now become one of our first international members.

Finally, a huge vote of thanks was extended to all members of our excellent staff team and to our enthusiastic team of volunteers who work in many different areas of museum activities. Thanks was also given to our funders who are essential to our work.

7. **MUSEUM SUB COMMITTEE REPORT:** Alison Davies advised that this sub committee meets regularly every two months, chaired by herself. Its remit is to support and advise the Curator on the overall work of the museum, its exhibits and operational matters, including monitoring Museum income and expenditure. Dr Jim McPherson has agreed to take on the role of Chair from January 2026.

Lynne Mahoney addressed the meeting, saying that the Heritage Hub extension with the community room in which we were sitting is an excellent resource and particularly beneficial for visiting community groups, including schools. Lynne thanked the Board for their support, Peter Wild for all his guidance and support, and Caroline Seymour, Assistant Curator, without whom Lynne could not achieve what she does. Finally, she advised that the comments received from the Visitor Survey are excellent without exception.

8. **FRIENDS OF DORNOCH HERITAGE SOCIETY REPORT:** Peter Wild advised that the role of the Friends is to raise funds through a varied programme of events to support the work of the museum. A recent Music Quiz held in Clashmore Hall was particularly successful. Peter thanked all members of his loyal team and welcomed Wilf Hadley to the committee. He advised that the membership system is still under review but it is hoped that renewal and collection of subs will be streamlined with the imminent implementation of the Membership Mojo program.

9. **FINANCIAL REPORTS:**

- a) **Review of 2024/25 Accounts:** the accounts have been finalised. Report attached.
- b) **Appointment of Independent Examiner:** Jerry Bishop (Treasurer) explained that Voluntary Groups Sutherland (VGS) had been unable to act as the Independent Examiner of the SCIO's accounts for 2023/24 accounts due to the high turnover involved in the funding of the extension project. The firm of Goldwell's in Tain were appointed instead. Now that the Heritage Hub project has finished, however, a return to VGS was proposed and agreed.
- c) **Review of Heritage Hub Project to date:** Jerry advised that the accounts for this project are in the process of being finalised and presented a summary of the accounts.

- d) **Annual Subscriptions:** the Board proposes to maintain the subscription fee at £20 for 2025/26 and this was approved by the meeting.

10. AOCB and CLOSING REMARKS: As there was no other business, Alison Davies concluded by thanking members for their attendance, inviting all to stay for refreshments and two presentations, and closed the meeting.

PRESENTATIONS: A presentation was made to Andrew Senior to thank him for his valued support and guidance during his time as a member of the Board, including two years acting as Co-Chair with Alison. Andrew will be missed on the Board but will still be working with the Archiving Team amongst other activities.

A presentation was then made to Jerry Bishop who has retired after serving 10 years as a Trustee, latterly replacing Tony Rundell as SCIO Treasurer. Jerry supervised all aspects of the Heritage Hub project, tightly managing the finances to ensure we stayed within the budget. In addition, Jerry has provided support in very many different ways. He was thanked for his dedication to the work of the museum and presented with an engraved whisky decanter, glasses, and a bottle of his favourite dram.