

HISTORYLINKS COMMITTEE MEETING

Held at Whinhill 10.30am Tuesday 19th March 2024

- 1. Present** Alison Davies (Chair), Jerry Bishop, Anne Coombs, Heather Martin, Lynne Mahoney (Curator), Fiona McKinlay, Graeme Muckart, Peter Wild.

Apologies, Dr Elizabeth Ritchie.

John Barnes attended

- 2. Minutes of previous meeting (20th February)** The minutes were agreed as a correct record. GM volunteered to take the minutes at the next meeting.

- 3. Matters Arising** Matters arising were dealt with on the agenda.

4. Financial Report

Draft Budget 2024

JB spoke to the circulated reports on Museum finances. The possibility of the HLH funding being totally or partially withdrawn has been considered. This could result in up to 12% drop in museum income. Suggested mitigations of this possible loss of income are included in the circulated document 'Financial Outlook – Income Generation'. The main proposal is to increase the entry fee to £5 and £4 Concession increasing to £6 and £4.50 Concession once the extension is open. The committee endorsed these increases.

The Trustees have agreed to increase the salaries for the staff by 5%.

The present cleaner has informed the Trustees of her intention to leave. If the possible replacement accepts the position she will be added to the staff. The previous cleaner was paid under a contract arrangement so in the future the cleaner salary will be shown in staff costs.

The museum contribution to the BID will be £450.

Visit Scotland will no longer grade museums, this will save £150 for their visit.

The report has been presented to the Board and agreed by them.

5. Reports:

a. Reports on Cataloguing and Copyright

John Barnes had provided the committee with the annual report on cataloguing and the revised policy on copyright of photos and documents in the archive.

He spoke about the changes to the copyright statement on the website and the new system of dealing with requests to use any document, photograph, or MP3/MP4 held by the museum. He also explained the process if there was an objection to image use. He has created a flow chart for the archive team to use. This will also be available for the staff and volunteers.

He provided an explanation of the changes in the cataloguing of the accessions. The new system is very successful and he thanked JB for getting a grant to facilitate the changeover.

MGS require us to provide copies of all the accession records on Archive paper prior to accreditation of the museum. There are 23 years of records and this will require a considerable time to complete plus the cost of the Archive quality paper. It was concluded that **LM** approach MGS to see if this could be done digitally.

AD thanked him and the archive team for their work and John left the meeting.

6.

a. Dornoch SCIO Board -AD

AD reported the Board has met and action on their decisions appear in the minutes of this meeting.

b. Dornoch Heritage Society – PW

Two successful meetings have been held recently. Todd Warnock will give the last talk of the season on April 25th. There will be a coffee morning on 15th April.

7. Income generation

This has been discussed at Board level and a document with suggestions has been previously circulated.

The increase in entry fees are included in the financial report.

a. Visitor Experiences

A programme of walks was discussed including the provision of walks specifically for Station hotel. The Station hotel walks will start and finish at the hotel and be different to the Town Trail walks in order to provide an exclusive experience for them, The Town Trail walks could be extended to include different themes, Archaeology (**AC** agreed to lead) Railway, (provided by David Mahoney) and Natural environment. **AC** was a Blue Badge guide and offered to provide training within the programme planned by LM and Caroline.

Once the extension is opened the walks could include hands-on or live experiences in the Community room. These experiences could be separate events and could include traditional crafts and refreshments.

AC suggested that Fibre Fest could potentially use the Community room for either an activity or an exhibition in 2025. There was a short discussion on whether Historylinks could host a display of historic garments from the collection supplemented with the replica garments from the Granton on Spey collection. **AD** suggested this could become a collaboration with FF. **AC** to take forward to the FF committee.

a. Enlarging our group of Local Sponsors

The Board members have agreed to try and expand the number of local sponsors.

b. International supporters group

The committee discussed the development of a 'Friends of Dornoch Heritage' group.

AD is convening a short life working group, and having a meeting with Board members and RDGC which will consider community engagement, contact with the Donald Ross society and Highland Societies abroad. How to acknowledge the 'Friends' was discussed. Behind the scenes experiences and levels of contribution recognition were considered.

c. Legacy scheme

A legacy scheme was briefly discussed and it was thought this should be low key but would be discussed further in the future.

d. Scheme of Delegation

Richard Hickson proposed this at the January Board meeting to clarify responsibilities. Fiona H offered a template and work is progressing to tailor this for Historylinks. It will be considered at future meetings.

7. Access policy

The draft was completed by **FMcK**. There were some queries about the hearing loops. Were they still necessary and how the change of the position of the exhibits will be changed when the extension is opened. The need for transcriptions was also considered. HM undertook to transcribe the railway film commentary and possibly others if needed.

The Welcome introductory sheet will require updating when the extension is opened as will the Guides to the museum in a number of languages.

FMcK has been revising Employment/HR policies for the Board. Museum policies will be further considered by the Museum Committee in line with the Accreditation requirements.

8. Curator's Report LM

YCC

Continues to meet weekly. Sally Wild is working on an art project with the children, 'Species on the Edge' in partnership with Nature Scot. There are 10 regular attendees.

Trish Mathews from Brora Learning Zone, Storyteller, Jenny Neesham and Tessa Till from ARCH Highland have all expressed an interest in working with the children next term.

Laura will have finished the 20 YCC sessions funded by MGS at Easter and will go on to deliver the remainder of the Outreach Worker activity plan.

Community Curation Project

We have appointed Flora Lindsey as Community Curation worker funded by MGS to develop community content for the extension. Flora is an artist and storyteller who has experience in co-ordinating and leading groups.

Separately, she has expressed an interest in leading YCC.

Blog Book

Lynne will ask Caroline to take this forward once she has finished the exhibition she is working on.

Cleaner

Susan Douglas will be leaving us after many years as cleaner. We have a candidate in mind for the role. Dawn Noble works at the Dornoch Hub and is interested in taking on cleaning hours at the museum.

Ospisdale Brooch

National Museum of Scotland require a condition report for this loan. I am working through this for submission at the end of March.

The specifications for the glass case are needed for the form. NMS may have this on file from the time of the loan.

Plaiden Ell

I have submitted the application to Historic Scotland and Highland Council re the cleaning of the stone. Phil Richardson of Archaeology Scotland is happy to deliver a community workshop around the moss removal and cleaning gravestones in general.

Spirit of the Highlands Tapestry

It was decided that the panels should return to Inverness until the extension is ready to display them. I will liaise with Amy Macleod, Event Development Officer, Highlife Highland about delivery to the museum.

Cist at Springfield building site

Mary Peteranna AOC Archaeology offered the stones belonging to the burial Cist at the Springfield building site to the museum. The stones have been delivered and I am hoping we can incorporate them in the landscaping outside.

Civic and Golf room

The Charter and the Robes are now in their cases. I have emailed Cath Macangus about the loose thistle in the chain of office. No response as yet.

Finishing off interpretation to go to Acorn Signs who will print it onto 5 A2 panels for the Civic room.

I am working with Eileen Macrae, Archivist at RDGC on the Carnegie Shield winners. Other interpretation is on the history of the club, Donald and Alec Ross and John Sutherland

Then and Now

This display is being revamped by Caroline to include more shops and objects.

Extension

The proposed plan for the extension exhibition space has been circulated to committee.

Museum retail area

We are sourcing products from Brora Social Enterprise and Barn Owl Bothy in an attempt to stock environmentally friendly products. Both have offered to produce bespoke gifts using inspiration from museum objects.

Visit Scotland

The Quality Assurance scheme will come to an end on 31st March 2025

Extract from Visit Scotland email:

Instead of “assuring” a business at a single point in time, we’ll focus on a programme delivering useful information and insight year-round to help businesses develop the visitor experience and respond to the changing needs of visitors.

- *as a QA member, you will retain your current grading until 31 March 2025*
- *there will be no fee for the 2024/25 scheme year*
- *our schedule of visits for the 2023/24 scheme year will continue to be managed through face-to-face and digital for the next few months*

Number	Donor	Details	Accept
D 0553	Peter Wild	Drone photographs of the progress of the extension	Accepted at the last meeting.
D 0554	Alison Davies	Colour image of the signing of the agreement between Pinehurst and Dornoch	✓
D 0555	Peter Wild	Documents and colour image relating to Dornoch Curling Pond	✓

E 0944	Heather Martin	Small leaf shaped Dornoch souvenir	✓
E 0945	John Barnes	Fibre Fest brochure 2024	✓

PW/LM have spoken to Catherine MacAngus about the loose thistle on the Provost's chain and she will take it forward to the Community Council. The ATS wish to use the robes and chain at the D Day landing celebrations on 6th June.

9. New Museum Exhibitions LM

LM has nearly completed the panels for the Civic Room and **JB** suggested Tony Rundle could be approached to proof read them. This was agreed.

PW had collected 2 halberds from the Council chambers. These will accompany the robes and chain in the Civic Room exhibition.

A 'Wish you were here' Exhibition is planned for the space vacated by the Railway exhibition once the extension is opened.

10. Progress on Heritage Hub and Entrance Refurbishment JB

JB reported the extension was making progress with the decorators starting and the joiners finishing work. The electricians are nearly finished and the harling is due to begin soon. The builders still anticipate a finish date at the end of April.

The Reception is almost complete and the restocking of the shelves will begin soon. It is intended to remove the fittings from the surplus toilet and **JB** has purchased a set of selves to fit out this space for much needed storage. It is intended that the articles stored in the loft will be moved into this space.

HM suggested that the dark wood framing on the ceiling of the reception area be painted white to make it lighter and tie in with the rest of the updated area. This was supported and **PW** offered to look into this idea.

10. AOCB

JB was asked about the opening date for the museum. This will depend on the access to the front of the museum. It may be possible to run booked tours before the museum is fully opened.

11. Date of next meeting

Tuesday 21st May, 10.30am Venue to be confirmed.

