

**Ullapool Museum Trust Minutes of the Annual General Meeting,
held at 7pm on Wednesday 9th December 2020 online by Zoom**

Present: Members: Ellie Ing (Chair), Nigel Carr (treasurer), Alison Parsons (secretary), Alastair Cunningham, Jenny Cunningham, Ian Rettie, Mo McBeath, Gillian Stephens, Cathy Dagg, Kate Rettie, Margaret Maclean, Bruce Ing, Don Macleod, Jackie Macleod, Robbie MacKenzie, Alice Mikiety, Chrissy Boyd, Ann Urquhart, Oliver Gero, Fiona Gero, Penny Stewart, David Heaney, Anna Welti, Peter Newling, Joan Michael, Effie MacKenzie, Anne Campbell. In attendance: Helen Avenell and Siobhan Beatson

1. **Notice calling the meeting:** The Chair confirmed that notice of the meeting had been issued to all members of the Trust in accordance with the constitution.
2. **Apologies:** Catriona Martin, John Baldwin, Janet Urquhart.
3. **Minutes of the last AGM:** the minutes of the AGM held on 7 November 2019, having been previously circulated, were approved on the proposal of Alistair Cunningham, seconded Alison Parsons.
4. **Directors' Report and Company Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2019:** A précis of the Directors' Report and Company Accounts had been previously circulated; the full version had been available online. The Chair reminded members that these refer to the last financial year and therefore do not reflect this season's activities. Nigel Carr, as Treasurer, gave a brief overview of the accounts: income for the year totalled £47,578 against expenditure of £50,745 giving a small deficit of £3,167. Nigel offered thanks to Tim Wright for preparing the accounts.
5. **Chair's report for the period since the last AGM:** Ellie Ing gave a verbal report – the text of which is appended at the end of the minutes.
6. **The appointment of a reporting accountant:** The Board recommended the continued appointment of Tim Wright, Chartered Accountant, as reporting accountant for the financial year: this was agreed by Members.
7. **Retirement and Election of Directors:** Alison Parsons and Nigel Carr retired on rotation. Nigel Carr was re-elected to the board and Jemma Middleton, Lesley Spenceley and George Hobbs were elected to the board.
8. **Submission of changes to the Articles of Association:** Alistair Cunningham presented the proposed changes to the Articles of Association (see attached) and these were agreed by the Members.
9. **Appeal for more board members:** Ellie Ing made an appeal to the Members for more people to join the board.

The chair thanked everyone for their attendance and interest. The meeting closed and was followed by a short presentation by Helen Avenell on the Lost Inverlael project followed by questions. **Close of meeting**

Chair's report to the AGM:

Activities, achievements and performance

We moved into the winter season of 2019 having had a very successful open season in terms of activities and visitor numbers. In anticipation of extending our visitor hours we suggested at our AGM that we could explore the possibility of opening on a Sunday for part of the day. This would involve discussions with the Church to revoke our previous agreement, our members and the wider community. The Board had agreed that it would like to be in a position to invite people to the Museum on Sundays, but there was no guarantee that it would be financially viable and would therefore require careful thought and research. There were a number of objections to this

proposal, so we carried out a survey to gauge our members and local feeling. The results were firmly for opening on a Sunday if the Church agreed and if it was financially beneficial. We have written to the Church authorities and are awaiting their decision. This is on hold at present.

In November we hosted the launch of James Macgregor' and Robbie Mackenzie's book 'On the Yachts', a record of the Lochbroom seamen from 1880 – 1950. We had a wonderful evening that was so well supported by local people. The proceeds of the book are being donated to the Museum and we thank both Robbie and James for their kindness.

Pauline and Robbie have continued their valuable service to the Museum through genealogy research for people wanting to learn where their ancestors came from in Lochbroom and how they lived. Much of this was done from home.

The period after Christmas until March was spent preparing for the new season. In that time, we were updating our archives and accessioning more objects. This involved photographing them and uploading them to our data system, e-hive, which can be viewed on-line. We also continued the preparation of booklets to sell in our gift shop. We now have developed a Museum style and preferred size of booklet and we hope to publish more on topics related to our displays and research findings in the future.

As we approached our final preparations for opening in April it became clear that the spread of Covid 19 was going to affect us. Siobhan had accepted the post of Manager and was due to commence in the post from the first of April. We were able to have an emergency face to face Board meeting, just prior to lock down, when we planned for the possible opening in May. Siobhan had prepared several programmes of actions that she hoped we could follow. We calculated that without visitor attendance we could only survive financially until August.

In early April it became obvious that we would not be able to open in May and from this time on we held Board meeting and Ops meetings by Zoom. They were quite frequent as we had to decide how best to protect Siobhan and Helen's future as well as the Museum's. After much consideration it was agreed to continue their employment rather than furlough them, as we were hopeful to receive grants from the Local Authority, Museums' Galleries Scotland and the National Heritage Lottery Fund. Having staff in situ would mean a quicker return to opening when that became possible and would also allow us to use media/digital methods to broadcast our presence as well as providing protection to the building and its collections.

Uppermost in our minds was to continue the 'Lost Inverlael' project and with this aim we appointed, after tender, the Highland Archaeological Services to carry this out. The project, which Helen, our curator will tell you about shortly in more detail, marks the 200th anniversary of the Inverlael clearances by exploring the historical and cultural landscape of Inverlael in conjunction with archaeological excavations.

During lockdown Siobhan was working hard on various digital and on-line activities which have been most successful in promoting the Museum. She has taken part in the 'Heritage Café' with other Highland Museums, a network to share ideas and good practices, and from this there has developed an online Highland Threads Exhibition (a costume project) commencing in March 2021.

We will be displaying our Roska Yacht jersey. VE day had to be virtual and a live 'Facebook' memorial took place. 'Virtual VE 75' included Robbie carrying out oral history sessions over the phone – so many thanks to her. The material collected was then combined into a video outlining the men who were lost or taken prisoner at St Valery. This video has been seen by over 30,000 viewers. Because of her work in promoting social media and digital events, Siobhan was invited to participate in a phone call with Fergus Ewing, the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy to the Scottish parliament, to discuss how Covid 19 had affected Museums. In June, Siobhan joined an international digital conference, 'The Audience Challenge', along with other Highland Museums to explain methods that have helped to widen our contact in the highland community - such as inclusive activities for children and people with disabilities. The 'Hector' podcast, part of the Highland Object Project made possible through the support of Museums Highland Heritage has attracted much take up and has helped us to see just what is possible digitally. We were moving towards more modern ways of promoting our Museum and Covid has given us the nudge! In August we were able to host the MacDonald Armouries event which was well attended by local people and Siobhan has contributed a chapter for the Seafood Shack book and supplied photographs from our collection.

We finally opened our doors to the public on August 1st after a mighty clean up as our annual bird visitors were unable to get out to freedom and had died within. Very sad! Siobhan organised supplies and trained us all for the new Covid routines and they have worked well as no one has caught Covid so far! Archival work has been limited and many of our displays switched off, but all our films were combined into one and shown from the projector. A tremendous thank you to our volunteer receptionists, Penny, Robbie, Nigel, Kit, Jenny, Chrissy and Alice who have had to carry out cleaning of the surfaces during their usual stints. Our new paid receptionist Arran MacDonald has covered some hours, but we have not been able to open on a Wednesdays. Despite all of these draw backs our takings for the summer period have been no less than 50%. Nigel will be reporting on our finances which have obviously suffered during this period, but we have been enormously grateful for the grants we did receive.

Developments and Plans

It is difficult to plan too far ahead at this stage because we just do not know when we can be fully operational again, but we are determined to be ready for the usual April opening and are thus using the time to consolidate and catch up with the many tasks that had to be put on one side including work on our collections and preparing for the next accreditation assessment.

I would like to thank my fellow Board members, Helen, Siobhan, the reception volunteers and Arran for all their hard work and dedication during this very difficult time. I am indebted to them for their support which has allowed us to survive this year.

But most importantly to the future of the Museum, I am sending out a plea for new Board members. Some of us are not getting any younger so we need fresh blood and new ideas! Nigel, our Treasurer and Company Secretary of seven years is leaving us in March and Alison retires as Secretary from today. We will also be losing other members in December 2021.

Thank you

Ellie Ing, chair of the board of trustees