



NWH Board of Management Meeting

Inverness/Hybrid

10th September 2024 2.30pm - 5pm

Chair – Derek Lewis

Board Members Present

Alex Macdonald, Independent Board Member

Anne Frater, EIS Board Member(T)

Carl Haberl, Independent Board Member

Cassandra Greenford, UNISON Board Member

Chris Alliston, Independent Board Member (T)

Derek Lewis, Chairman of the Board of Management UHI NWH

Ian MacEachern, Independent Board Member

Lydia Rohmer, Principal & Chief Executive UHI NWH

Michael Foxley, Independent Board Member

Neil Hope, Vice Chair & Independent Board Member

Nicolas Kowalczyk, HISA Board Member

Rupert Marshall, Independent Board Member(T)

Sarah Fraser, Independent Board Member

Shona MacDougall, Senior Independent Board Member

Willie Macdonald, Vice Chair & Independent Board Member

Also, in Attendance

Debbie Miller, ELT, Vice Principal (Operations) & SRO NH

Derek Bond, ELT, Vice Principal – Resources & Enterprise (CFO)

Ellen Maclean, Secretary to the Board of Management

Fiona Grant, Director of Academic Affairs

[Withheld], PA to the Principal & Chief Executive

Giles Huby, Programme Director, Merger

Hannah Ritchie Muir, ELT, Vice Principal (Academic) & SRO OH

Helen Aird, Head of Marketing & Communications

Keith Coyne, Assistant Director, SFC

Vicky Ferguson, Director of HR & Organisational Development

1. Welcome & apologies for absence

Apologies: Struan MacKie, Diana Macleod

2. Declarations of Interest

Cassandra Greenford, UNISON Board Member– Item 6.3 with reference to dispute.

Anne Frater, EIS Board Member – Item 16, Board Recruitment

Noted

3. Requests to star unstarred agenda items

Item 12 [Withheld]

Starred

4. Minutes of meeting held on 26th June 2024

Approved

5. Actions arising since meeting held on 26th June 2024 (Chair)

The outline business case is developing – all opportunities must be investigated.

Action: One of Fiona Grant’s team to look at curriculum opportunities.

6. Regular reports for noting (HISA Board Member)

6.1 HISA Report

Nicolas Kowalczyk (NK) had no access to the most recent report. Debbie Miller (DM) asked for an update on the scale of the problem for new students looking for housing this year. NK advised that Fort William has approximately 200 waiting to lease. A one bed rental is between £750 - £1k per month in the area.

Noted

6.2 Chairs Report (Chair)

The Chair addressed the Board to advise that more email communications and Board meetings are possible following the OBC meeting this afternoon. All academic partners will be expected to decide on their preferred option from those presented by the end of November. Lydia Rohmer (LR) followed that this was a crucial period coming and it is important to stay connected with the Board as work unfolds. We must weigh up the options and benefits. It is vital that we get the next phase correct.

Noted

6.3 Principals Report (Principal)

Paper included in the Board pack.

Principal updated the Board on external factors financially impacting the College. EIS FELA and UNISON have now settled the National dispute regarding pay. Written confirmation has been received from the Scottish Government stating that the ongoing additional uplift for EIS will be met from Scot Gov funds. Assurances have been given that there will be no direct impact on 2024/25 budgets.

Public sector funding is challenging. We are looking for additional funding, though this might not be forthcoming.

There are educational reforms with a new qualifications framework this year. UHI are responding as are Colleges Scotland. The preferred Government option is yet to be seen.

The organisational design is not complete, there is an interim structure in place. Vacancies for new posts cannot move forward at this time due to the local dispute.

Cnoc Soilleir Phase 2 has been confirmed. Board na Gaelic has accepted the plan to provide Gaelic education in the Uists.

Student recruitment – there has been an increase in FE. HE remains under par. Productivity & staff morale are still low but starting to stabilise since the merger.

Snr IBM – Is our estates strategy being driven by national guidelines?

VP Debbie Miller (DM) – We have a revised estates strategy; it is ours but follows the national guidelines. A micro-operational plan will be presented to the F&GP Committee before going to the next Board.

UHI Website issues were flagged as not fit for purpose. GH – responded that there is a huge piece of work ongoing to address this area.

Noted

Action: Chair to raise Boards concerns re the website with UHI EO.

7 *Financial Update (CFO)

7.1 Financial Update Paper

[Withheld]

Noted

7.2 External Audit (CFO)

The Lews Castle audit is almost complete. North Highland may be finished by the end of September. The original fees presented for these audits were [Withheld], [Withheld] for 2023/24 & [Withheld] for 2024/25.

CFO continued that the major issue presently is that guidance is needed from SFC. We have put in our formal request for funding, though there has been no formal confirmation from UHI.

Noted

8.* Internal Audits (CFO)

Attached to Board pack show no major issues. Wbg have been reappointed for next year's internal audits.

Noted

9 * NWH H&S Report (DM)

Attached to Board pack

This report was through the F&GP Committee before being presented to the Board. Fire risk assessments have or are scheduled to be conducted across all sites. We still have no Board Champion for H&S.

CG voiced concerns that Portree FRA had not been completed as of today's date.

AF & CG queried if incidents were being under reported.

CA asked that Staff, when on site are encouraged to report incidents as well as being issued comms on H&S reporting.

RM asked why incidents peak in the Autumn (Graph 1.3.1)

VP-DM – these peaks would align with a new intake of students, starting new apprenticeship courses, etc.

RM requested occurrences and trends be compared with Colleges Scotland.

Noted

10* NWH Organisational Design Risk Register (GH)

Reading from paper attached to Board Pack. I am currently finishing off impact assessment fully drafted by UHI & there is no requirement to carry out an Islands Impact Assessment as step 5 shows that this is not required under the act. The curriculum review assessment will be finalised soon. HR needs to take forward final job descriptions.

AF – Comparison on legacy colleges – what wasn't in figures for the islands impact assessment was how many of the staff leaving were teaching staff? As an educational establishment we should be tracking teaching staff leaving to enable delivery on the islands.

GH advised that there will be a feedback window. In terms of Curriculum being offered, it will still deliver with the staff it has.

AF – Referring to staff who left through VS – was there an assumption made that anyone over 55 was retiring?

GH – HR provided the information which was anonymous.

[Noted comment regarding potential accuracy of figures]

Noted

Action: GH to quantify retirement v VS figures

11* Capital Projects

CFO explained the purpose of the paper on page 78 of the pack was to show that the Top 3 projects therein required Board approval. Approval has already been given to the Stornoway roof, Fort William windows and the 3rd, Stornoway Boiler case was presented today.

If there was flexibility to use capital grants allocation, we could use the funding for some repair work.

ROV has taken a different route, we are only preparing for the curriculum at present.

Approved - spend on Stornoway boiler repairs.

Action – CFO to investigate if boiler is servicing Lews Castle.

12* [Withheld]

[Withheld]

13* Cnoc Soilleir Update on Phase 2 (MF & RM)

With reference to items in the Board Pack including media reports, MF gave thanks to all involved in securing the funding required to proceed with Phase 2.

The vision is to raise the profile of the school & increase the curriculum, develop ideas and take the project forward. AF congratulated MF & RM on their successful outcome clarifying that UHI is not financially involved. HA is supporting with a comms plan and MF thanked HA for her work.

AF asked that the Gaelic team in Stornoway be included in all Gaelic promotion discussions.

Noted

14 NWH Risk Register (Principal)

Attached to Board Pack

No changes of note.

15 Policies for Approval (Vicky Ferguson (VF))

HR Policies endorsed at HR Committee 28.08.2024

Questions raised around term limit of person dealing with miscarriage / stillbirth. HR Chair explained that these policies are written with the understanding that other policies can be used to be kind in any one individual case.

Approved

15.1 ToFR for F&GP endorsed at F&GP &HR Committee for Board approval

Terms of Reference for F&GP Committee 21.08.2024 with section 5.7 endorsed at HR Committee 28.08.2024

Approved

16 Board Meeting Dates & Recruitment

16.1 Board & Committee recruitment plan

Board discussed further investigation of using Aspen People to recruit Board members and to take proposal forward to Remuneration Committee for further consideration.

Approved.

16.2 Board & Committee Dates 3 Year Plan

Proposed meeting dates presented for Board consideration.

Approved.

17 GDPR Training for Board Members

Debbie Miller presented a training package for Board Members produced by Kate Hannay.

Approved

A.O.B.

HISA Rep stated he is refreshed to be part of open communication in his new appointment to the Board of Management and is looking forward to being involved in future meetings.

The Chair thanked Anne Frater for her significant contribution to the Board, as a college lecturer and for her promotion of the Gaelic language.

Meeting closed at 1723