



Minutes of the CELM 2025 AGM held at Ionad Naomh Moluag 6 September 2025

Present:

Sarah Armitage, Jennifer Baker, Caroline Bath, Douglas Breingan, Morag Ferguson, Morag & Richard Fowler, Mia Lalanne, Anne Livingstone, Memory McDonald, Duncan MacGregor, Michelle MacGregor, Ian MacKinnon, Noelle Odling, Catriona White

Apologies:

Ailsa & David Clarke, Tony Currie, Alison Diamond, Stuart Ross & Pauline Dowling, Freda & Duncan Drysdale, Lesley Hamilton, Clare Howarth, Fiona Lees, Maureen Mitchell, Mark Newman, Peggy Nicolson, Mike & Elaine Robertson, John & Marilyn Whitehead, Julian & Carol Wormleighton

Minutes of the 2024 CELM AGM

Proposed Ian MacKinnon, seconded Caroline Bath. Accepted unanimously.

There were no matters arising.

Chair Report 2025 (Jennifer Baker)

Good afternoon everybody and thank you for attending our 2025 AGM.

Again, I must start with sad news. We have lost two of our courageous and visionary founders. What a legacy they have left. Cathy Carmichael was the first treasurer of the CELM board, Mairi Smith was one of the first members. Their contribution to the ethos and social responsibility of this centre is too huge to be measured. Without the determination of them and their like to preserve the Gaelic culture and particular language of the Isle of Lismore, we would not be gathering here today.

We have been very conscious of the lack of Gaelic here in the Centre as that generation has left us. To our delight, and relief, Peggy Nicolson will be our Gaelic consultant from now on. Thanks, Peggy. We are planning, too, a Gaelic month next February.

It's been another successful year for the Centre. Noelle will show you the figures but we are never complacent. Extremely hard work continues - and all done by volunteers. There are no words to thank them for their huge efforts in running the shop, maintaining the building interior and exterior, managing the David White Library and carrying out genealogical searches on request, updating the website and social media, liaising with other groups on and off the island and, of course, curating objects and archive and rich island history.

Bob Hay has been the chief mover and shaker in that last. I cannot begin to list what he has done for this museum as our archivist and organiser and fundraiser of three digs around the medieval cathedral. In addition, he has written three books on the history of the island and *A History of Lismore in 50 Objects*. We were devastated to learn that he was leaving the island to move on to different adventures. But we are delighted that he will remain as our archivist for at least another year.

Added to that, I must express again the generosity of people who, over the years, have gifted both the land that we are based on here at the Centre, and the 38 acres of land with historic Achinduin Castle. We also benefit hugely from people who have been generous enough to leave cash gifts in their Wills and to the MacDougall McCallum Foundation in USA who donate annually. And, of course, from day-to-day donations.

Thanks too to Beth Campbell for many of the documents and photographs used in this year's exhibition.

This place never stands still and it would take a long time for me to tell here what has and is being accomplished (all minutes are on our website and are very detailed) but the highlight must be the award achieved by the café, *Island Café of the Year* awarded by The Scottish Café and Bakery Awards 2025. Well deserved and huge congratulations to Sarah and Dan and their wonderful staff.

As to the future. We held a Community Consultation evening here last Wednesday when we laid out our plans to extend the Centre – particularly the café and kitchen, the shop and display areas.

Sarah and Dan are running their award-winning café under very cramped conditions. They deserve better from us, as do Sarah, Lesley and the volunteers who woman the counter 7 days a week – also in cramped and uncomfortable spaces.

And finally, so many thanks are due to the Board. I have been proud to chair such an enthusiastic and hardworking group of people. This coming year will be my last year as Chair. Morag is taking over from me. For this year we'll be working closely together so that the handover will be, hopefully, as smooth as possible.

Website Report (Pauline Dowling)

The Digital Heritage Centre is made up of the website, the digital and interactive museum displays and social media.

Knowing that the present website was unfit for purpose, I have devoted my time for the past year revising it, greatly helped by the generous and tireless inspiration, advice and support of Helen Crossan. Together we have created a new front page, a new menu, re-filed all posts and pages, each one of which has been checked for accuracy and relevancy. There are hundreds. To see it at its best look on a PC or laptop but the phone version works fine too. <https://www.lismoregaelicheritagecentre.org> This has made The Lismore Gaelic Heritage Centre highly visible to the world and fit to hand on.

There is a very significant problem; it is not yet a bilingual Gaelic and English website, and to make it so, if the board sees this as a priority, it will cost money. In the interim there is a notice on the front page advising of our intentions to create a more complete Gaelic version as soon as possible.

Since the website was started in 2012 I have run it but the true task was well beyond one person so I was able only to record and post. Fortunately, I have been recording Lismore since I arrived 35 years ago and so have a considerable archive and it is my intention eventually to create an accurate and complete, or as complete as I can make it, record of the Comann Eachdraidh Lios Mòr since 1994. Even though this is a massive task, I see it as vital to the centre and the island.

My recommendations this year and every year are: ideally someone should be appointed to run the **Lismore Gaelic Digital centre**. This must be a Gaelic speaker who will not only create the parallel website but will run the digital displays and the social media.

I will continue my work – no longer full time as I have other books to write – but I will create and post both the current stories and slowly add the historical ones.

Treasurers Report (Noelle Odling)

The accounts presented (previously circulated to members) were accepted unanimously. Proposed Douglas Breingan, Seconded Michelle MacGregor.

Curators Report (Morag Ferguson)

As outlined in the accreditation document, the Curator conducts a full inventory check of objects every 5 years and relies on location-routine condition reporting at shorter intervals (e.g. pre/post-exhibitions or loans). An inventory check was initiated in 2025, the check is 80% complete and will be finalised in 2026. The Curator would like to thank all volunteers who are helping with this.

Election of Board Members

In line with the memorandum and articles, Arthur Cross retired as a director. Jennifer Baker, Mike Robertson and Noelle Odling stepped down from the Board and were unanimously re-elected.

Annual Membership Fee

The annual membership fee will remain unchanged until the next AGM. The Board thanks the Members of CELM for their support financially and in other ways.

Independent Examiner

David McGregor of Simmers confirmed for a further year as independent examiner. Accepted unanimously. Proposed Memory McDonald, seconded Michelle MacGregor.

AOCB

Caroline Bath asked about funding for a Gaelic speaker assistant in the Heritage Centre. Jennifer said that we recognise that we were established as a Gaelic Heritage Centre and that there are fewer Gaelic speakers now on Lismore. Jennifer has organised a Gaelic Conference for February 2026 as part of the Taproot season of events. Peggy Nicolson will be our Gaelic consultant.

Ian MacKinnon on behalf of the members expressed thanks to Jennifer Baker for chairing the meeting and for all her work over the year.