

MINUTES, DORNOCH BID BOARD MEETING.

7pm Monday 30th March via Zoom and in person

IN ATTENDANCE: Gareth Dixon (**GD**), Claire Bruce (**CB**), Colin Thompson (**CT**), Ginny Knox (**GK**), Jo Johnston (**JJ**), Sharon Mackay (**SM**)

Apologies: Robert Smith (**RS**), Matt Logie (**ML**).

ITEM	DISCUSSION NOTE	ACTION
Matters/Actions arising from last minutes	Dornoch Town Wi-Fi. HB hopes to be able to connect to the old system next week. Rapier who installed the original equipment, has not responded to HB. HB has a plan if it doesn't work. CB suggests applying to CGF if there is a cost. We Are Dornoch. Agreed to re-start the crowdfunding at next Town Tidy. JJ to advise Phil and Catherine. GK and JJ to meet Donald and Paddy to progress with DADCA. Reprinted maps to have QR codes, post visit emails could include link to donate and banners with the QR code and Town Tidy info to be bought. BID Christmas Party. SM is to chase Graeme at RDGC for a quote. Dornoch as a motorcycling tourism hub. C/fwd. Town Tidy. JJ, SM, CB and GD to attend the first TT of 2026 on 31st March. Good response on social media and hopefully a good turnout of volunteers. Adoption of minutes. Proposed CB, and seconded JJ	SM GK/JJ SM SM
Finance -	Monthly report and Forecasting - Accounts to be submitted this week. All monies received from HC for 2026/7. Current bank balance healthy at £91k, of which £7k is Dornoch Gatherings. JJ to transfer £7k to DG account. JJ was thanked for her work. There was an issue with VAT with the HC Events grant claim. SM to ask HC if vat can be recovered with further invoice. JJ said that the cash flow includes possible projects, subject to funding being secured. Opt-in Members Update. £5.5k Opt In membership fees for 26/27. £2k paid to date. Recent Opt In members have been asking to join e.g. Highland Thrive/Shearer Property Co. as opposed to BID driving that. SM to draw up list of larger businesses to contact and will progress. Levy Billing 2026/7 is £74k. SM shared a table setting out a snapshot of changes in membership and income over 3 years. 188 NDR members at outset to 202 at present and an increase of £3k. The increase is mostly self-catering, increasing from 91 to 103. GK said that 75% of the visitor guest beds in Highlands are in self-catering properties! New Member billing protocol. SM advised that she had met with the business regarding the retrospective BID levy charges following their recent addition to the NDR system. The business accepted the proposed arrangement discussed at the previous Board meeting. Directors had agreed, on an exceptional and discretionary basis, to apply a 50% reduction to the retrospectively applied levy for the initial period only. This reflected the fact that the BID had not previously been aware the business was trading and therefore the business had not directly accessed or received certain BID promotional benefits during that time, although some indirect benefit would have been derived. SM advised of another member issue. It was agreed to advise owner to get property re-assessed to non-domestic rather than commercial rates. 2026 Grant funding routes. An application to Creative Scotland for £20k is ready to submit for the Autumn 26/Spring 27 Festivals. SM to get GK to approve.	JJ SM SM SM

	- SM discussed with Ward Manager, Fiona Richardson, possible funds for Signage, Shopfront Grants & Accessibility improvements. The Ward Discretionary fund and HC's Accessibility Fund suggested. CB asked for clarity on timeline for funding application timelines and process. CGF to be applied to in light businesses being in support of the new signs. - HIE Digital Adoption Grant to be considered for social media training, online bookability and AI training/support for members.	
Marketing	Website and Social Media activity/report. CB never got a report from EC but has got one for the advertising META campaign which ended in January which she will share. A different form of report that would provide KPI's, including a rolling report GK had requested, would take a lot longer to do EC has advised. CB offered to do it, but it is bigger than anticipated. JJ and CB have created a spreadsheet of monthly figures and EC will provide this for a monthly KPI update. The report will include the past two months. The Spring Campaign starting later in week and Autumn campaign will start at the end of the month. New Events Calendar Update. The residual fund was used to cover this cost. The new page is easier to manage, more user friendly and much more effective. SM to encourage Event organisers to keep sharing their event details. New BID Marketing support. All social media and website updates are going well thanks to in kind support.	CB CB CB/SM
Signage	New Maps. Information boards to updated in the next month. Retail Park Signage. Awaiting feedback from a few businesses in both locations. Those who have responded so far like the designs. SM to chase up final comments and give a deadline. The funding application to then be progressed. The Winter Lighting Trail fund awarded by the CGF can't be re-allocated to Signage.	SM SM
Events	Spring Highland Festival. 1,500 leaflets printed. SM thanked CB for help with listing events on website and programme. John at 2BCreative designed leaflet/banner. The programme link has been shared in RDGCs Newsletter, given out at the Venture North (VN) Conference and businesses, VisitScotland/VN events pages and via HC's staff intranet as well as shares by JJ and SM to various Highland social media pages. The META Campaign starts on the 3rd April. A banner is up at Nigg roundabout, and one to go up at Dornoch Castle. RS offered to put sign up at the entrance to town. He had to fix broken runners and hopes to get back to put up the sign up soon. The Autumn 2026 programme to be confirmed asap. GK suggests SM states the dates for Autumn to businesses to speed up the process. GK asked that we ask RDGC to drop the price of the round for the Autumn Festival 25% off. SM to request this for all Festivals going forward. Hogmanay2026 – CT updated the Board on great progress being made with Lesley Strang. The Distillery will launch a bottle much sooner with a view to raising £6.5k. The recent BID members meeting has led to pledges of funding and help. An Ambulance will need to be on standby £5k this year and it's likely the event will cost £16k. Wrist bands will be sold as part of fundraising and in return discounted offers via 'in-kind' support. 22 people to be on site on the night and organisers hope businesses can help a bit with that. Whisky Festival – taking place at RDGC. Lesley will run it and start promoting after Easter. £4k being saved with new venue.	SM CT CT
"Regulatory issues"	Non-Domestic Rates Revaluation. GK is hoping that Northern Highland self-catering and "chalet-park" businesses, see their actual revaluations lower than their draft ones, following the recent meeting with the Assessor during which he acknowledged they "do not understand the North well". The meeting on 24th April with the HA and his team is an opportunity for members to set out why things are different in the	

	North and they can be educated a bit. Colin Marr, Inverness Chamber and GK got good coverage in the Press and Journal on the matter. GK hopes this type of intervention is helpful and that rates come down. Second Homeowners. They have received Council Tax invoices that are triple the norm with no warning! A letter that came with the bill states next year it will be 3.5 times and year after that 4 times higher! Countless letters have come to Jim MacGillivray. GK shared a sample letter by Russell Munro, JJ said that some members of RDGC are setting up a group to do something about it. Jim MacGillivray suggested that some may want to turn second homes into STL. GK offered to work out a BID seminar for people wanting to set up a STL in Dornoch if there is demand.	GK
Member Comms/ meetings	Digital communications update. SM advised that digital growth is steady across Instagram, Facebook, and member channels. The fortnightly Newsletter has a 39% open rate which is average. BID Members Meeting with Highland Assessor - 24 April - 15 members booked so far. BID members are also invited to either the North Highland or Inverness Chamber meetings as part of collaborative working relationship with the CoCs.	
AOB	Newsletter – Overall branding could be improved but quite costly so for now ‘a nice to do’ rather than a necessity. Directors – GK to contact Fraser to confirm if still interested in coming onto the Board. SM to meet with him in the first instance.	CB GK

Date of next meeting – 7 pm, **Monday 4th May**, Dornoch Hub