

## Chairs report

This has been an extremely unusual and challenging year. I would like to say I hope you are all well and not being affected to much by the strange situation we find ourselves in.

This year started well with the Museum recording our highest number of visitors ever last year we were hoping for another bumper year and with the continued work of the Collections development team and the dedicated custodians and cleaning staff we expected this year to be as successful if not more so.

We were also starting to plan for a building project that would consider an extension on the pier and improve a number of aspects of the museum including disabled access, office space, new galleries and better custodian facilities. The initial concept plans have been completed and roughly costed and the next stage was to finalise them and start the main task of fundraising.

We were also looking at how we completed the project we have been working on for the last two years, and at ways we could continue the project and staff employed. We wanted to take the museum forward to becoming a collection of national significance which would bring with it support funding as well as raising the profile of our museum. These were our plans and to a large extent we have completed 90% of what we had set out to do which is remarkable given the situation we found ourselves in. The team worked extremely hard to finish the project and although we could not fully complete the project due to the museum being closed the funders we all happy that we had delivered what they had funded us to do.

We then were faced with COVID as everybody was and we had to react quickly and as we had suddenly lost our seasons income and had to halt our development plans.

The staff responded extremely well we supported them by putting them all on Furlough we also put the museum building down into a care and maintenance regime and I would like to thank Bart for his continued vigilance of the museum systems over this period ensuring that even though shut the museum stayed safe and well maintained. The CDT team could continue working until the end of the project in July and managed to do this in a safe manner allowing the final deliverables to be completed except for the final exhibition which was prepared but could not be displayed. It was annoying that where we had hoped to find funding to keep the staff and project going, we found ourselves now having to let the team go and go back to minimal paid staffing.

As time went on we realised that there were a number of COVID recovery and resilience funds opening up to support businesses get through this period and our funding team set to work investigating which of them we were eligible for ( not easy task given the ever changing criteria) and how to apply. We completed several applications and have been successful in attracting funds to support some work and COVID adaptations. We have continued this process and have applied for some larger pots of funding based around COVID recovery. Although we have not been successful so far we are hopeful that the most recent application we submitted to MGS, which we hear about in early December, will be successful as it is our best chance yet and would allow us to reemploy our collections team and develop a number of new aspects of the museum.

We did managed to open the museum in August under some very restricted access conditions and I would like to thank our staff who have managed to adapt to these new working arrangement extremely well and have allowed a number of the late summer visitors and locals to enjoy a visit to the museum albeit not quite the same experience as we would have hoped. We have kept this going through the last few months so people who are looking for things to do in a very restricted situation

can consider a visit to the museum. We as Trustees felt it was important to support our community by showing we were still open even though this has been at a financial loss.

This has been the most difficult year for all tourism related business, but we are not alone, and we can just hope that this does not last too much longer.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the staff who coped extremely well under completely new working conditions in particular Siobhan who has navigated the continually changing COVID landscape to ensure that the Museum was complying to all new regulations but also ensuring we did not miss any opportunity to attract funding to help us during these times. Janette has also worked very hard to keep the profile of the museum high even though she has had to drop back from the paid position to become an honouree curator once more (we hope only temporarily). Also, thanks to Norna and Katy who we had to let go when the funding finished but who have kept up their involvement with the Museum as volunteers.

I would also, like to pay tribute to two of our most senior staff Maureen Swanny and Marie Mowat who have both retired recently after more than 10 years' service to the museum each. It is sad to see them go but we hope to be able to welcome them back from time to time as friends.

More than ever in these difficult times we are extremely grateful for the support of our friends we would encourage you to continue this and if you have friends or colleagues that you think would be like minded to help get us through then please encourage them to become a friend of the museum.

Thanks Ian Johnstone, Chair of the Board of Trustees