

No 206

**THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM**

**AT A MEETING ON**

**TUESDAY 11 JULY 2006**

**AT 10.00 A.M.**

**AT THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM**

**Present**

**TRUSTEES**

Mr Oliver Stocken (in the Chair)  
Daniel Alexander QC  
Sir William Castell LVO  
Professor Dianne Edwards CBE FRS  
Professor Alex Halliday FRS  
Mr Ian J Henderson CBE  
Professor Georgina Mace OBE FRS  
Professor Jacquie McGlade  
Sir David Omand GCB

**In Attendance**

Dr Michael Dixon  
Paul Brereton  
Anna Cuss (Minutes)  
Neil Greenwood  
Professor Richard Lane (*items 977 and 990 onwards only*)  
David Sanders  
Professor Chris Stringer (*item 988 only*)  
David Thorpe  
Teresa Wild  
Frances Windsor

**Closed Session**

**976 REMUNERATION COMMITTEE**

The Chairman gave a verbal update on the Remuneration Committee meeting which had been held on 5 July, giving details of the awards made to posts within their remit, including the Director.

**977 KEEPER OF ENTOMOLOGY**

The Director and Professor Lane joined Trustees to give an update on the appointment of a Keeper of Entomology to fill the vacancy created by the previous Keeper who had left the Museum for an overseas post at the end of June. Trustees agreed to the proposal that, given the very crucial point that the Darwin Centre project had reached, the current Associate Keeper, be offered the post for a fixed 4-year term. This would allow the Museum to review the requirements of the post again once Darwin Centre Phase Two was up and running.

**Open session**

The remaining Directors then joined the Board for the remainder of the meeting.

Prior to the main business of the meeting, the Chairman, on behalf of the Board, welcomed Daniel Alexander to his first meeting. Mr Alexander had been co-opted to the Board to serve four years from 12 May 2006.

**978 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Louise Charlton, Professor Michael Hassell and Professor Linda Partridge.

**979 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 9 MAY 2006**

The minutes of the meeting of the Trustees held on 9 May 2006 were confirmed and signed.

**980 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MEETING OF 9 MAY 2006 (TP 06/33)**

- (i) Visiting Group 2006/07 (TM 9 May: 965)  
A prioritised list of members to invite had been produced in consultation with Professor Hassell. Letters to potential members had been despatched.
- (ii) Performance Information reporting (TM 9 May: 968)  
Trustees noted that, due to the difficulty in producing meaningful and up to date performance information to coincide with Board meetings, a monthly performance report would be forwarded to Trustees under separate cover. This report would reflect new performance indicators reported to DCMS and new KPIs as they were devised, to support new initiatives taken by the Museum. The first quarter report would be issued before the end of July.

**981 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

- (i) **Board Assessment.** The Chairman reminded Trustees that they had agreed as part of the external Board Assessment exercise conducted in 2005, to review their performance on an annual basis as part of one of their regular meetings. Given that the management response to the first exercise had been considered in February 2006, it was confirmed that the next review would be included on the agenda for the meeting on July 2007. In addition, the Board would commission a review by an external facilitator every three years, and the next review on this basis was therefore planned for 2008.
- (ii) **Appointments Process (TP 06/34).** Trustees received a report on the recent round of appointments to the Board, conducted under the new process of delegated responsibility, with support from the DCMS Appointments Unit. Clarification on how the process would work in practice had been requested as part of the follow up to the Board Assessment exercise. Trustees noted the report and were satisfied that the process had worked effectively. The schedule for future appointments, which would be managed primarily by the Nominations Committee, with reference to the Board, was also noted.

**982 DIRECTOR'S REPORT (TP 06/35)**

Prior to considering the Report, the Director informed Trustees of very recent correspondence with DCMS on discussions relating to the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR07). There were indications that the DCMS Departmental Expenditure Limit (DEL) for the next three years was under pressure from Treasury and the Museum, along with other DCMS funded bodies, had been asked to submit a range of options on how expenditure could be reduced over a 3-year period. Trustees engaged in a lengthy discussion on the consequences of the proposed cut in funding and the issues that would need to be addressed in providing options to DCMS. Noting that the Director and the Director of Finance would be attending a briefing meeting at DCMS on 12 July, Trustees suspended any further discussion until that meeting had taken place. The Director agreed to provide a written briefing to Trustees on the outcome of the meeting as well as a copy of the submission to DCMS, which was due in early September.

The Director then raised a number of other items from the Report:

- (i) **Strategy Meeting, 25 September.** Trustees noted that the news on future funding would have an impact upon their discussion of high-level strategic priorities and there would be some important choices to consider. Whilst in broad agreement with the recommended structure for the day, they requested further detail, by early September, on the four presentations to be given – overall context, science, Public Engagement and support services/infrastructure, to provide a clearer purpose to the day's discussion.
- (ii) **First quarter performance.** The Director confirmed that the first quarter had produced a strong performance from the public facing side of the Museum, relating both to *The Ship* which opened on 31 May, and *DinoJaws*, which was launched on 28 June to a VIP audience with attendant children. The decision to invite children, coupled with a highly effective media campaign was translating into excellent visitor figures.
- (iii) **Sir David Attenborough Gala Dinner.** A fundraising dinner had been held on 4 July, in honour of Sir David Attenborough, and with the aim of raising significant funds for the Sir David Attenborough Studio – a public engagement space within Darwin Centre Phase Two. The event had been generously supported by a number of individuals, leading to a significant profit for the Studio, exceeding expectation. Trustees congratulated those who had been involved in this successful event.
- (iv) **Student Summit**  
The Director informed Trustees that the Museum was hosting a special four-day Student Summit on climate change, which would offer young adults the opportunity to discuss the issues with some of the UK's leading climate experts and decision makers, including Sir David King, Jonathon Porritt, Ian Pearson and Nicky Gavron. Trustees would have the opportunity, over lunch, to meet some of the speakers, as well as senior representatives from the British Council, who, as substantial stakeholders in the Summit, had helped 50 overseas students from 18 countries to attend.

### **983 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **984 REPORT FROM THE AUDIT COMMITTEE**

Sir William Castell, as Chair of the Audit Committee, gave a verbal report on the meeting, which had preceded the Board. The main business of the Committee had focussed on the annual accounts for 2005/06, the adequacy and completeness of Darwin Centre Phase Two project reports, an update on significant control issues and the recent news from DCMS concerning CSR07.

In addition, the Committee had considered a proposal to merge the business of the Audit and Finance Committees. Following discussion, the Committee recommended that the two remain separate as at present, to enable the Audit Committee to maintain its impartiality over the Museum's financial reporting. However, it was agreed that the roles and responsibilities of Finance and Audit Committees would be reviewed to establish whether any functions currently carried out by the Finance Committee should transfer to the Audit Committee.

### **985 APPROVAL OF THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS (TP 06/36)**

Mr Greenwood presented the 2005-06 accounts, which had been considered in detail by the Finance Committee on 3 July and Audit Committee on 11 July, for approval. After discussion, Trustees:

- Approved, in principle, since they were in the final stages of audit, the accounts for the Natural History Museum, and gave delegated approval for the Chairman and Director to finalise them by the deadline of week commencing 17 July
- Approved the accounts, for which the audits were complete, for the Natural History Museum Special Funds Trust and the Natural History Museum Benevolent Fund

### **986 FINANCIAL REPORT (TP 06/37)**

Mr Greenwood reported that the financial position would henceforth be reviewed by the Finance Committee in advance of each Trustees' meeting, so that a summary only would be provided to the Board, setting out the overall position. The summary presented therefore, reported on the financial outturn for 2005-06 and the position for April - May 2006.

Mr Greenwood commented that for the first two months of 2006/07, the budgeted salary savings from a 'vacancy lag' had been achieved, principally from Science Group.

Trustees noted the report, in particular the components contributing to the increase in the General Fund. Mr Greenwood gave further information on these components and agreed on the continuing need to give clear justification for carrying liquid reserves such as these.

### **987 DARWIN CENTRE PHASE TWO (TP 06/38)**

Trustees received the first of the regular reports to each Board meeting on progress with the project across a number of areas, including expenditure, cashflow, programme, construction, public offer, science and communications. Some concerns were expressed about the complexity of the new organisational structure and the number of committees/steering groups involved.

The Director confirmed that, on the recommendation of the OGC Gateway Review 0/3 carried out in March 2006 (management response attached as appendix 2), changes had been made to the structure of the project team to draw together the individual strands of the project and to establish clear lines of responsibility and accountability for its delivery. Consequently, Mr Greenwood had been appointed overall Programme Director. Trustees noted that the current Project Director had recently resigned to take up another position, and that discussions were underway within the Sub-Committee to establish the most effective way to approach management of the construction project hereon.

In terms of the physical structure, Mr Greenwood reported that demolition of the old Entomology building had been completed on 20 May and that the piling operation begun in early June had finished ahead of schedule.

The Director advised Trustees that Mr Henry Barlow had sent a letter to the Secretary of State for DCMS in respect of his concerns over the DC2 project.

### **988 ANCIENT HUMAN OCCUPATION OF BRITAIN (AHOB) PROJECT (TP 06/39)**

Professor Chris Stringer, Merit Researcher in the Museum's Palaeontology Department and Director of the AHOB project joined the meeting to give a presentation on progress thus far. Mr Stringer outlined the aim of this collaborative project involving archaeologists, palaeontologists and geologists at Institute in Britain and Germany, which was to build a calendar of human presence and absence in Britain during the Pleistocene and to investigate the controlling factors. Key questions to be addressed

by the project centred on the date and nature of the earliest human occupation of Britain, the implications of the arrival of new technology and whether Britain had ever been truly abandoned by humans for significant periods of time.

The initial 5-year project, running from 2001-2006, had been funded by a significant grant from the Leverhulme Trust, and in recognition of the important findings and outcomes, a further significant grant to fund the project through to 2010 had been recently awarded, again by the Leverhulme Trust, for a second phase, focusing on Ancient Britain and its European Context. Professor Stringer added that the project had generated a high level of interest from the media, with his book *Homo britannicus* to be published in October 2006 and a Time Team feature being filmed for TV. Plans were also underway for a tourable exhibition.

Trustees were delighted to hear of the project's success and congratulated all those involved in achieving it. They confirmed that such presentations should be a regular activity for Trustee meetings in the future.

#### **989 ACCIDENT AND INCIDENT REPORT: MAY/JUNE 2006 (TP 06/40)**

Mr Brereton introduced paper TP 06/40, which comprised the first month's accident and incident statistics generated from the new Compel Reporting Accident Database introduced in mid May 2006. The system had been introduced to improve management of reporting and follow up action with the relevant internal and external authorities.

Trustees recognised that, as predicted with the introduction of a more robust system, the number of visitor incidents reported had increased significantly. However, until monthly comparisons were possible, it was difficult to make any meaningful comparisons and there was no cause for concern. Trustees were to receive a quarterly report in future, including an assessment of action taken following accidents and incidents. Statistical analysis would become more relevant as sufficient data was collated over time.

#### **990 EXHIBITION ROAD PROJECT UPDATE (TP 06/41)**

The Director gave a presentation on progress with the project, which aimed to turn Exhibition Road into one of the finest streetscapes in London and provide an improved environment for residents and users of the area, including the 18 million visitors it attracted each year. Exhibition Road was one of ten pilot projects in the Mayor of London's Making Space for Londoners initiative, which aimed to create or upgrade 100 public spaces in London over the coming five years. A bid for significant funding had been made to the Big Lottery Fund with a decision expected in September 2006.

Recognising that the project offered a greater opportunity than a simple physical road and public access improvement scheme, the 15 cultural and educational institutions occupying the land around Exhibition Road (a legacy of the Great Exhibition of 1851), had joined together in a formal Cultural Consortium, with the common aim of raising the profile of the area, engaging in joint projects and encouraging a wider and more diverse audience.

Trustees noted the range of opportunities which the project offered to the Museum in terms of its public engagement and financial objectives which were to be defined and maximised through its internal planning structure, primarily Master Plan, Commercial Strategy and Gallery Plan. In the longer term, the opportunities for involvement in the 2012 Olympics, both as an individual institution and as part of the Cultural Consortium, were acknowledged.

Trustees stressed that a detailed strategy for management and maintenance of the space, once created, was key, considering the large number of partners involved and the Museum would need to establish a clear view of its individual and shared responsibilities within the scheme to avoid any future disputes or misunderstandings.

Further updates on project progress would be made as appropriate and further plans for Olympic themed events would be considered within the 2010-2015 Special Exhibitions Strategy and Programme at the July 2007 meeting of the Board.

#### **991 REPORT OF MUSEUM'S ACTIVITIES (TP 06/42)**

Trustees noted the report and agreed that a glossary clarifying acronyms and scientific vocabulary would be helpful in future reports.

#### **992 AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE BOARD MEETINGS (TP 06/43)**

Trustees noted the items to be considered at future meetings. The Chairman recommended that an annual meeting to discuss strategic priorities, to follow the meeting planned for September 2006, was desirable. A date would be sought for 2007.

#### **993 EVENTS DIARY (TP 06/44)**

Trustees noted the diary detailing events which they might be interested to attend, and which would henceforth be updated on a monthly basis.

#### **994 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Two items were raised:

##### Beijing Museum of Natural History

Professor Edwards informed Trustees that she had recently, on a business visit to China, met the Director of the Beijing Museum, Dr Li Cheng Sen, who was also a Palaeobotanist. The Beijing Museum, which held significant collections, was undergoing a complete refurbishment due for completion in time for the 2008 Olympics. Professor Edwards reported that Dr Li Cheng would be visiting the UK in September and would welcome the opportunity to hear about recent work on developing the collections and public offer, particularly in relation to the Darwin Centre project.

The Director agreed that assistance would be made available and added that he and Professor Lane had been invited by Dr Li Cheng to visit Beijing in November as part of a delegation of European natural history museum Directors, with the purpose of opening discussions on potential collaboration.

##### Trustee tours

The Chairman offered Trustees the opportunity, before lunch, to visit *The Ship: The Art of Climate Change*, the new *DinoJaws* exhibition, or to view a special display of some of the key items from the recently purchased Kohler Darwin Collection in the Rare Books Room.

#### **995 AGM OF THE NHM TRADING COMPANY**

The AGM of the Trading Company took place.

#### **996 DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS**

Monday 25 September 2006 at 0930 at St Stephen's Club, 34 and 34A Queen Anne's Gate (strategy)

Thursday 16 November 2006 at 0930 at the Natural History Museum (regular)