

No 207

THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

AT A MEETING ON

THURSDAY 16 NOVEMBER 2006

AT 9.30 A.M.

AT THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

Present

TRUSTEES

Oliver Stocken (in the Chair)
Daniel Alexander QC
Louise Charlton
Professor Dianne Edwards CBE FRS
Professor Alex Halliday FRS
Professor Michael Hassell CBE FRS
Mr Ian J Henderson CBE
Professor Georgina Mace OBE FRS
Professor Jacquie McGlade
Sir David Omand GCB
Professor Linda Partridge CBE FRS FRSE

In Attendance

Dr Michael Dixon
Paul Brereton
Anna Cuss (Minutes)
Neil Greenwood
Professor Richard Lane
David Sanders
David Thorpe
Teresa Wild
Frances Windsor

Dr Honor Gay (*item 1009 (ii) only*)
Graham Higley (*item 1008 (vi) only*)
Gordon Rankmore (*item 1009 (i) only*)

Open session

997 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Sir William Castell.

998 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 11 JULY 2006

The minutes of the meeting of the Trustees held on 11 July 2006 were confirmed and signed.

999 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MEETING OF 11 JULY 2006 (TP 06/45)

Trustees noted the progress which had been made on items raised at the last meeting, in particular:

(i) Trustees' Strategy Day (TM 11 July: 992)

Trustees agreed that the day had been of great benefit to both senior staff and members of the Board, giving the opportunity to present progress so far and debate future direction. Action points arising from the day would be addressed through subsequent meetings of the Board. The strategy meeting would henceforth take place on an annual basis, with the next meeting planned for 26 June 2007.

(ii) Beijing Museum of Natural History (TM 11 July: 959 (ii))

The Director noted that he had not been able to take part in the delegation of European natural history museum Directors visiting China in mid November due, primarily, to its occurrence at the same time as the present Board meeting. However, the Chairman was able to report on a brief visit he had made to the Beijing Museum whilst in China on other business. It was clear that there were mutual benefits to establishing some form of cooperation with the Beijing Museum and this would be taken forward as an action by the Director of Science.

1000 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

- (i) **Museum Corporate Governance.** Trustees noted that inconsistencies had arisen in the Corporate Governance Framework document since it had been approved by the Board in 2005. These had been shown particularly by work on the corporate governance section of the collections management policies, to be considered later in the agenda. The need to address these inconsistencies provided the opportunity to carry out a more in depth review of the Corporate Governance Framework to incorporate a number of other updates, including those to the Board's key committees, which would also be considered later in the agenda. Trustees agreed that they should review a revised Corporate Governance Framework at their February meeting and further agreed to review the document on a more regular basis as part of the annual Board assessment.
- (ii) **Trustee attendance at Museum events.** The Chairman expressed his desire that Trustees be called up on more regularly to attend key events, including those aimed particularly at raising funds for the Museum. A proposal for the basis of Trustee involvement would be provided to the next meeting.

1001 DIRECTOR'S REPORT (TP 06/47)

The Director highlighted particular items from the Report:

- (i) **Brand – vision statement.** Following Trustees' discussion of the brand vision at their strategy day, Directors had reviewed the vision statement and a more aspirational and easily recognisable version was presented to Trustees. This version was considered a great improvement and Trustees agreed that the specific wording be agreed by the brand editorial team.
- (ii) **Shell Wildlife Photographer of the Year.** The Director gave a report on the award ceremony and opening of the exhibition and the steps which had been taken to improve security and minimise disruption to visitors caused by objectors to the sponsorship of the exhibition. New introductions in the present year included a print on demand function for prints located on the website, which was proving extremely successful.

The Museum's approach to ethical and other issues in relation to engagement with corporate donors, sponsors and partners had been under consideration in the light of sponsorship from Shell. Trustees reviewed the guidelines which had now been introduced and noted the escalation of decision-making, according to perceived risk, up to and including a Board decision.
- (iii) **Darwin Centre Phase Two Fundraising.** Trustees would receive a report on the public offer and communications strategy at their next meeting. It was requested that this include an update on fundraising successes and opportunities to date, particularly the availability of naming rights.
- (iv) **Buckingham Palace Science Day.** The Museum had participated actively in a Science Day held at Buckingham Palace as part of HM The Queen's 80th birthday celebrations on 24 October. The event, co-organised by the Royal Society, Royal Academy of Engineering and the Science Museum was aimed at A-level students and focussed on presenting scientific careers in a positive light. The Museum's stand had made a great impact upon many of the 2,000 students who took part, due in part to the generous loan of plasma screens and desktop equipment from a corporate sponsor. Professor Partridge had represented the Museum at Board level at an evening reception to which a number of senior staff and other science-based Trustees were invited.

1002 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

1003 FINANCIAL REPORT

- (i) Financial Review for the period April-September 2006 (TP 06/48)
Mr Greenwood informed Trustees that, following a review of reporting processes, they would receive a restructured and more detailed quarterly report from Finance from February onwards. For the period in question, however, the forecast year end outturn was above original budget, due largely to good trading income during July and August. The revised forecast accommodated both the full vacancy factor and unallocated income which had formed part of the original budget. It also covered an increase to the Estates allocation to address particular expenditure pressures.

Professor Lane explained that although there had been salary savings within Science Group, a further ring-fenced amount had been allocated to a start up fund for the new science research leaders. Trustees were pleased to hear of these appointments and encouraged the Museum to utilise their talents in the public engagement with science as far as possible.

(ii) Budget for 2007/08 to 2010/11 (TP 06/49)

Mr Greenwood presented a balanced operating budget for 2007-08 and an indicative scenario for the period from 2008-09, given the uncertainty over future years' grant in aid levels. Trustees noted, in particular, the accommodation of an increase to the Museum's contribution to Darwin Centre Phase Two and received assurance that sufficient allocations had been made to both maintain the Estate to an adequate degree and address the implications of the Comprehensive Spending Review. It was also noted that forecast budget figures for self-generated income were prudent, though targets set for achieving these were somewhat more challenging.

Trustees were disappointed to observe that the Museum had recently received notification of its future ineligibility for Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) funding, though they noted that steps were being taken to address this with BBSRC.

In conclusion, Trustees approved the proposed budget for 2007-08.

(iii) Future of the Finance and Audit Committees (TP 06/50)

The Director outlined a proposal, recently reviewed by the Audit Committee, following a review of the roles and responsibilities of the Finance and Audit Committees. Trustees recognised that the proposal coincided with improved reporting of financial reporting to the Board and would also simplify the accounts approval process. They therefore agreed that:

- The Audit Committee take sole responsibility for reviewing the Annual Report and Accounts and make recommendations for acceptance to the Board of Trustees;
- The Finance Committee become redundant as a formal Committee of the Board;
- A new mechanism be introduced by which the draft budget were challenged in advance of its presentation to the full Board, most likely by the Chairman.

These changes in process would be reflected in the review of the Corporate Governance Framework to be submitted to the Board in February 2007.

1004 PERFORMANCE SCORECARD – 2ND QUARTER 2006/07 (TP 06/51)

Trustees were pleased to note the Museum's exceptional performance in the second quarter of 2006-07, particularly the record-breaking visitor attendance figures in August. Assurances were given that the quality of experience for visitors was being maintained.

1005 DARWIN CENTRE PHASE TWO (DC2) (TP 06/52)

Mr Henderson, as Chair of the DC2 Committee, presented an update on significant elements of the DC2 programme. Construction remained on schedule, as did all other elements.

In conclusion, Trustees approved the increase in total budget, to be accommodated by an increase to the Museum's original contribution (fully provided for in the Museum budget) and by fundraising. Trustees also noted the actions which had been taken and which were proposed to mitigate future cost increases. Assurance was given that this included limitation of non-standard design elements where possible, without compromise to quality or functionality.

The Director confirmed that further assurances to the Board on cost control would be provided in future by the Audit Committee and by the next stage of the OGC review which was due in March/April 2007. Information on the public elements of the project would be provided to the Board in February.

1006 AUDIT COMMITTEE

In the absence of Sir William Castell, Chair of the Audit Committee, Sir David Omand, member of the Audit Committee, gave a verbal report on business considered at the meeting on 6 November. The general theme of the meeting had been how the Audit Committee might support the Museum's executive by assessing the flow of management information and whether it was adequate for the purposes of providing assurances. Other significant issues were:

- NAO - Damian Brewitt now attended meetings as NAO Director (replacing Janet Angus)
- Theft from the Dinojaws exhibition – exhibition development processes would be reviewed to ensure that sufficient weight was given to security issues in future
- Risk appetite – examples would be obtained from other organisations to provide some context before the Museum resolved this issue
- Audit Report Implementation – recommendations would be provided to the next meeting on timely and proportional implementation of audit recommendations, in particular a robust process for dealing with priority 3 items.

1007 HUMAN RESOURCES: ACCIDENT AND INCIDENT REPORT: MAY - OCTOBER 2006 (TP 06/53)

Trustees noted the report and the improvements which had been made to the management process for identifying hazards in the Museum as a result of reported incidents and consequently to the process for reducing the number of incidents.

1008 SCIENCE GROUP

(i) Proposal from the Human Remains Advisory Panel (TP 06/54)

Trustees received advice from the meeting of the NHM Human Remains Advisory Panel held on 18 October 2006. The Panel had considered two cases concerning material of Australian origin.

It was agreed that the Museum's policy should be that formal claims for return should be made by national governments. Governments would be able to nominate appropriate groups with which the Museum should engage in considering the claim and that might be appropriate recipients for any remains that were returned. It was noted that for some countries a government claim might not be possible and in such cases the Museum would deal with appropriate formal community groups or similar bodies: governments would be asked for a view in such cases.

The Australian Government had written to the Museum in 2005 asking for the return of all Aboriginal human remains to Australia. Two initial cases under this claim had been considered by the Advisory Panel and were being brought for consideration. The first was a request from the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre for the return of all Aboriginal remains from Tasmania (the Australian Government had indicated that TAC were the appropriate body for engagement in this case). The second was a case brought forward by the NHM concerning an item identified as illegally exported from Australia in 1913. Other remains from Australia under this claim were still under discussion.

Trustees considered the evidence and advice of the NHM Human Remains Advisory Panel. Trustees emphasised in discussion that the issues were both difficult and complex and that there were competing interests and points of view involved. The importance of the remains to Aboriginal people was confirmed, but there was also recognition of the importance of the remains in scientific terms and the potential significance of new discoveries for future generations, including those of Aboriginal origin. Because it had been indicated that the Tasmanian remains would be destroyed on return, it was agreed that the remains should first be analysed for further scientific information.

Trustees agreed to take action in accordance with the advice of the Panel.

It was agreed, in response to the request for return of Tasmanian remains:

- That the remains known to be those of Tasmanian Aborigines should be transferred on the advice of the Australian Government to an appropriate recipient: most probably the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre. (These are PA HR 332, 334, 335, 337, 338, 340, 341, 342, 343, 344, 345, 412, 590, 593, 594, 597 and 604). That any remains that may be subsequently identified positively as those of Tasmanian Aborigines should also be so transferred. Trustees recommended that the recipients should be asked if they wished to receive copies of scientific publications and other materials relating to the remains.
- That the act of return should follow the completion of generation of data that will be of continuing use in science for generating new knowledge.
- That any DNA or other samples taken in this process should be returned with the remains. All data would be made freely available for scientific purposes.

It was agreed, in response to the proposal from the NHM under the Australian Government request, that:

- Given the documented illegality of export, the skull (PA HR 380) should be transferred to appropriate custodians to be identified in agreement with the Australian Government.
- The skull should not be made available for research pending its return.

(ii) Collection Management Policies (TP 06/55)

Professor Lane reported that, following a review of international best practice in collections management, the policies governing the management and care of the Museum's collection had been reviewed and updated.

In discussion, Trustees raised the following issues;

- The classification of scientific research data as part of 'the collection'
- Whether the Museum's partners should be encouraged to observe these policies
- Communication of these policies, particularly on rights of disposal, to potential donors of material to the collection

Professor Lane confirmed that these issues would be followed up and that the procedures accompanying the policies (due for completion June 2007) would address issues of legal entitlement.

In conclusion, Trustees formally adopted the Collection Management Policies and noted that, until the Corporate Governance Framework was reviewed, as had been agreed earlier in the agenda, the Collection Management Policies would take precedence in areas relating to powers of purchase and disposal of collections.

(iii) Freedom of Information: Acquisition by Purchase Policy (TP 06/56)

Trustees were aware that the Museum had adopted a Freedom of Information Act Policy (2005), which provided a framework within which the Museum could ensure compliance with the requirements of the Act. The additional policy on Acquisition by Purchase is now presented in the light of recent recommendations made by the Charity Commission in relation to the acquisition of works of art by Trustees and the Information Commissioner's Office and Information Tribunal rulings on acquisition prices.

Noting that the additional policy would strengthen corporate governance in this area, Trustees endorsed its adoption.

(iv) Loan of building stones to the British Geological Survey (TP 06/57)

Professor Lane reported on a proposal loan 3,000 building stone specimens currently held in the Museum collections to the British Geological Survey (BGS) on a long-term basis. With the majority of enquiries on building stone concentrated at BGS, the loan of the collection to them would provide better opportunities for visitors to access and use the resource and for further developments in curation. The minor loss of earnings from commercial enquiries to the Museum, to the advantage of BGS was noted, though on the positive side the loan would provide opportunities for closer collaboration with the BGS.

On the basis of this recommendation, Trustees approved the loan.

(v) Visiting Groups to Science Departments (TP 06/58)

Professor Lane reported to Trustees that the review of actions taken by the Museum in response to the recommendations of the visiting group to the Palaeontology Department in 2005 would be presented to the Board in February 2007. The 2006 visiting group to Zoology would take place in December under the Chairmanship of Professor Hassell.

For 2007, it was proposed that the visiting group take the Botany Department as their subject. Trustees agreed to this proposal and confirmed that Professor McGlade would take on the role of Chair of the group on this occasion.

(vi) Biodiversity Heritage Library (TP 06/59)

Mr Higley, Head of Library and Information Services, joined the meeting to present an update on progress with the Biodiversity Heritage Library Project which had been formed in 2005 to improve access to and digitisation of library collections. The ten project partners from a range of major institutions in the UK and US were now meeting regularly and had already raised funds for project planning and an initial database development. The result of a significant bid to a large foundation in the US was due to be communicated in mid-2007.

Trustees expressed their support for the project and noted the encouraging developments that were taking place.

1009 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT GROUP

(i) 2007/08 Public Programme (TP 06/60)

Mr Rankmore, Head of Interpretation and Design, joined the meeting to make a short presentation on the family blockbuster planned for 2007 – *Ice Station Antarctica*. The exhibition content was being developed jointly by the Museum and the British Antarctic Survey, one of many international scientific institutions running research programmes in the region. The exhibition was particularly timely in coinciding with International Polar Year 2007/09 (for which the BAS was hosting a programme office) and the 50th anniversary of International Geophysical Year. The exhibition would be launched at the Museum in May 2007 as part of the Public Programme, before starting a 5-year tour through the UK and Europe.

Trustees noted and gave their support to the development of this fascinating exhibition within the wider context of plans for the public programme in 2007-08.

In relation to this item, the Director reported on an event organised by the Antarctic Heritage Trust and hosted by the Chairman on behalf of the Museum on 9 November. The event, which had been attended by Helen Clark, New Zealand Prime Minister, Mark Burton, the New Zealand Minister of Justice, Jonathan Hunt, the New Zealand High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, Sean Woodward, the Minister for Creative Industries & Tourism and David Lammy, the Minister for Culture, was held primarily in celebration of the Museum's partnership with the Antarctic Heritage Trust. The partnership sought to profile British heritage in Antarctic science through the use of interactive media as well as a series of discussion events, designed to give the public a chance to explore the issues of Antarctic heritage in more depth.

(ii) Learning at the Museum – progress and future ambition (TP 06/61)

Dr Gay, Head of Learning, joined the meeting to make a short presentation on progress with the Museum's learning strategy, first developed in 2003-04 to bring the Museum up to date with the profound changes in museum learning emerging across the sector and to establish aims and objectives for future good practice.

With a large and diverse learning offer now in place, and visible improvements achieved in increasing learning activity at the Museum, a number of other areas had been identified in which the Museum could aspire to be a leader in the cultural/science learning sector. These comprised four main areas - secondary science; the learning volunteer programme; science communication; and diversity and inclusion.

Trustees endorsed these four areas of leadership and in particular gave their support to aspirations relating to secondary science. They noted the Museum's increasing reputation in this area, primarily as a result of its consultation document 'How can Natural History Museums support secondary science teaching and learning', but more recently as the venue of choice for the DfES's launch of the Out of Classroom Learning Manifesto.

1010 REPORT OF MUSEUM ACTIVITIES (TP 06/62)

The report was noted.

1011 AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE BOARD MEETINGS (TP 06/43)

The rolling agenda for future meetings was noted.

1012 EVENTS DIARY (TP 06/44)

Trustees noted the diary of forthcoming events.

1013 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

1014 SCIENCE DISCUSSION ON COLLECTIONS DEVELOPMENT

During the afternoon, Trustees were invited to attend the first in a series of science discussions aimed at increasing engagement of members of the Board with the scientific activities of the Museum and with the intention of using outputs to inform development of Museum strategy and policy. On this occasion, the discussion focused on collections development, in particular scope and access.

Discussions would take place twice a year, with the next session planned for May 2007.

1015 DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS

Tuesday 27 February 2007 at 0930 at the Natural History Museum