

No 189

THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

AT A MEETING ON

TUESDAY 20 MAY, 2003

AT 10.00 A.M.

AT THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

Present

TRUSTEES

Professor Dianne Edwards, FRS
Professor Christopher Leaver, CBE, FRS
Professor Sir Keith O'Nions FRS (in the Chair)
Professor Michael Hassell CBE, FRS
Professor Linda Partridge, FRS
Mr Oliver Stocken
Sir Richard Sykes FRS

Sir Neil Chalmers
Dr Mary Fridlington (Secretary to the Board)

Ms Sharon Ament, Ms Deirdre Candlin, Mr Neil Greenwood, Mr David Hill and Professor Henderson were in attendance.

Closed session

708 APPOINTMENT OF A NEW DIRECTOR

Trustees held a preliminary discussion regarding the recruitment of a successor to Sir Neil Chalmers as Director of the Museum. It was agreed that initial steps should be taken and further discussion to confirm the recruitment process would take place at the July board meeting.

709 APPOINTMENT OF NEW TRUSTEES

It was agreed that the Chairman should confirm in writing to Jana Bennett the verbal agreement for her to stand down, which they had discussed on January 9. In view of the retirement of Anne McLaren at the end of 2003, Trustees noted that there are two Prime Ministerial-appointed Trustee vacancies to fill. A number of potential names were discussed and the Chairman undertook to remind all Trustees of these vacancies in writing, and invite them to provide names for the July board meeting, when the short list of names would be produced for DCMS.

710 THE DARWIN CENTRE CAMPAIGN

Trustees were informed of the change to the fund-raising campaign in view of the departure of the Director in October 2004. It was recognised that the fund-raising campaign is a challenging one, especially in the current economic climate. Oliver Stocken, as chair of Trustees' Finance Committee, agreed that the main board would be provided with updates of progress at each meeting from the Finance Committee. The Committee would scrutinise the financial sense and any risks associated with decisions made regarding the campaign, as it had for Darwin Centre Phase One.

The Director confirmed that staff at the Museum are developing various options to raise the necessary funds, which will be brought to Trustees via Finance Committee in due course.

In view of this additional work that Finance Committee would undertake, Professor Partridge agreed to join as an additional member.

Open session

711 NEW ROLE FOR THE DIRECTOR

Trustees extended their congratulations to Sir Neil Chalmers on his recent appointment as Warden of Wadham College, Oxford, which he would take up in October 2004.

712 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Ms Jana Bennett, Professor Jacquie McGlade, Dame Judith Mayhew Jonas, Lord Palumbo and Professor Anne McLaren. Professor Dianne Edwards was welcomed to her first board meeting.

713 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 11 FEBRUARY 2003

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

714 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MEETING OF 11 FEBRUARY 2003

- Frozen Ark (TM 11 February: 695)
Professor Henderson confirmed that the Frozen Ark Steering Committee and the NHM/Frozen Ark Liaison Committee had both met to develop this proposal. Professor McLaren chairs the latter. The activity will focus on collecting and storing the DNA tissue of organisms that are likely to become extinct. It is intended that the first steps towards achieving this will be to create a database of candidate species, and to hold a Royal Society Meeting to unite interested parties. Trustees noted that the recent submission by the Natural History Museum to the European Union's Framework VI initiative to receive funding to integrate activities across Europe on access to collections is also likely to deal in part with DNA materials, and will link to the Frozen Ark activity.
- DCMS Human Remains Working Group. (TM 11 February: 696(iii))
The Director confirmed that work is now progressing on the final version of the report, and it is anticipated that it will be ready for Ministers by the end of June. Trustees noted that the contents and recommendations of the working group will remain confidential until announced by Ministers.
- Corporate Plan and Funding Agreement (TM 11 February: 698)
It was confirmed that the Minister and the Chairman had signed the Funding Agreement for 2003-06, and that the final draft of the Corporate Plan had been approved by the Chairman.

715 DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- i) **Museum activities between May 2003 and October 2004.** The Director described to Trustees the projects that have already started and would be delivered prior to his departure: (i) The Visitor Offer, including the Masterplan and the Conservation Plan, which will be considered by Trustees at their July 2003 board meeting; (ii) The transition to the new Director of Science and how Dr Lane will build upon the activities that have been delivered under the directorship of Professor Henderson; (iii) The Darwin Centre Phase Two; (iv) A National Museums Directors Conference study into the economic impact of national museums and galleries to inform the 2004 Spending Review bidding process; (v) Establishing a network of institutions in England that hold significant collections of natural history, to enhance collaborative working and strengthen the standing of the sector (vi) Internal projects such as a review of pay and grading. Trustees noted these activities.
- ii) **Jennifer d'Abo.** The Director reported the sad news that Ms d'Abo had died on 30 April. She had been a member of the Board of Trustees from 1989 to 1998, and had contributed a great deal to the Museum during her time as a Trustee, particularly in being a founding member of the Development Trust. The Director confirmed that he would represent the Museum at her memorial service on 13 June.
- iii) **Development Council.** The Director confirmed that Harvey Soning had agreed to act as Deputy Chairman to Lord Palumbo on the Development Council. Trustees approved this appointment.
- iv) **Individual Merit Promotions.** The Director was delighted to confirm that Dr Monica Grady (Mineralogy), Dr Sandra Knapp (Botany) and Dr Mark Wilkinson (Zoology) had each received Individual Merit Promotions in the 2003 scheme. As Dr Wilkinson is currently Associate Keeper for Zoology, Trustees approved the selection of his replacement should commence, and Professor Partridge agreed to be a member of the interview panel.
- iv) **The review of Science activities.** Trustees were informed that Dr Lane, the new Director of Science, would be invited to review how the science undertaken by the Museum is organised and assessed (current assessment is by Visiting Group). Trustees agreed that it would not be sensible to embark on a further Visiting Group devoted to the review of a specific area of science until this has been delivered. They agreed that there should be an element of flexibility in the timing of the next Visiting Group, which Trustees noted might not be until 2005.
- v) **Gulbenkian Foundation Award.** The Director was pleased to report that the Darwin Centre had been short-listed for this award. A team of Museum staff had attended the award ceremony on May 15 and the prize was won by National Centre for Citizenship and the Law, Nottingham.

- vi) **250 anniversary of Sir Hans Sloane's death.** To commemorate this anniversary of the foundation of the British Museum, and therefore the Natural History Museum, the Director confirmed that the Museum has been awarded a grant by the Cadogan Estate to take the Natural History Museum into the Borough, with displays in shops and local nature trails for children.

716 SPECIAL EXHIBITIONS STRATEGY (TP 03/10)

Ms Ament presented the future vision for the Special Exhibitions at the Museum. This included plans for the Jerwood Gallery, Gallery 38 and the external space of the Museum in the short term. Trustees noted that a change in approach was necessary following the introduction of free admission, and that the publicity impact of holding special exhibitions ensured that visitors came to the Museum during a finite period of time. Other impacts of special exhibitions include revenue generation, the associated educational programmes and the potential to tour the exhibition, thereby raising the Museum's profile outside London and overseas.

Trustees noted that the proposal to establish a 750m² gallery adjacent to a retail area is an element of the Masterplan, which will be considered in greater detail at the July meeting, along with the Conservation Plan.

The following points were raised:

- Sir Richard Sykes asked why the Museum promoted itself, since it now receives 3 million visitors a year, and asked for details of business plans and anticipated returns. Ms Ament confirmed that the focus of the promotion is to encourage visitors to 'convert' to visiting paying exhibitions, and that work is now beginning on developing such detailed plans and projections.
- Mr Stocken urged the Museum to consider corporate sponsorship of future Special Exhibitions, and said that such agreements are developed up to three years in advance of them being staged. Ms Ament confirmed that sponsorships are being sought with this timescale in mind.

Trustees endorsed the suggestions for the future Special Exhibitions and noted that the development of a 750m² gallery would be considered in more detail in July.

717 ISO 14001 ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT POLICIES (TP 03/11)

Mr Kevin Rellis, Head of Estates, and Mr Tony Dolding, Energy and Environment Manager from the Estates Department joined Trustees for this item.

Mr Dolding presented Trustees with an overview of the ISO 14001 policy and the impact that it would have on the Museum's activities. Trustees noted that the final accreditation would be produced in July or August 2003. Mr Rellis informed Trustees that this activity placed the Museum at the forefront of Environmental Management in the sector and added that the Museum is contributing to an international benchmarking study to establish best practice in the area. This study, run by the International Association of Museum Facilities Administrators will enable best practice to be established.

Trustees were impressed by the effort that had been placed into this activity and congratulated Mr Rellis and Mr Dolding on their achievements to date.

In discussion Trustees considered how the Museum compares to other institutions in Europe and the costs associated with receiving such accreditation. It was noted that the necessary audits by the British Standards Institute do cost the Museum, as does the environmental management budget. However, Mr Rellis confirmed that costs these will be more than off-set in the long term, due to the resultant efficiencies, careful use of resources and future savings when the landfill tax is fully introduced.

718 WOMEN IN SCIENCE AT THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM (TP 03/12)

Dr Fridlington presented this paper to inform Trustees of the Museum's response to the recently produced report from Baroness Greenfield, and the resultant funding announced by Government for the area.

Trustees welcomed and endorsed this proposed initiative and asked to be informed of the findings of the working group in due course.

719 DARWIN CENTRE – FINDINGS OF THE OGC REVIEW (TP03/13)

Mr Pellow, Project Director of the Darwin Centre, joined the meeting for this item.

Mr Pellow informed Trustees of the recent review by the Office of Government Commerce into the Darwin Centre Phase Two project. The project had been awarded an 'amber' rating, which was an endorsement that the project is well run. Trustees noted that the recommendations of the report had resulted in a reassessment and alteration to the management of the project and initiation of contingency arrangements should the necessary funds not be acquired.

Trustees noted the findings of the OGC review and were pleased that an amber status had been achieved.

720 HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT 2002-03 AND PLAN 2003-04 (TP 03/14)

Mr Alan Barlow, Acting Head of Health and Safety joined Trustees for this item.

Mr Barlow presented the report on Health and Safety during 2002-03 and the plan for 2003-04. Trustees noted that the recorded accident levels included a high proportion of first aid incidents, and that the incident rates are low compared to other organisations in the sector. Trustees noted the report and approved the plan for 2003-04.

In view of the fact that the Home Secretary had announced plans on May 20, 2003 to introduce a new charge of corporate manslaughter, the Director asked Mr Barlow to produce a summary of the impact that it would have on Trustees and senior managers at the Museum.

721 AUDIT COMMITTEE REPORT

Sir Richard Sykes, as Chair of the Audit Committee, provided a verbal summary of the meeting held on 4 April 2003. The main item that had been considered was the mechanical and electrical contract. Mr Greenwood and Ms Candlin provided details of the developments to date and confirmed that the new contractor is present on site and preparations for the hand over from the current contractor at the end of June are well advanced.

Trustees noted the report, and were informed that where meeting dates permit, at future meetings they would be provided with a written summary of the committee's work.

722 REPORT ON MUSEUM ACTIVITIES (TP 03/15)

The Director drew Trustees attention to the following activities:

Science. Trustees were pleased to note that the Museum had received funding for two projects from DEFRA's Darwin Initiative.

Exhibitions. Trustees were encouraged to visit the Peter Randall-Page display of sculptures and drawings, respectively on display on the front lawns and in galleries 39 and 50.

Tring. Trustees noted that the reception area at Tring has recently benefited from a refurbishment.

723 PERFORMANCE INFORMATION (TP 03/09)

Trustees noted the performance information, and the Directors offered the following comment:

Learning: Ms Ament informed Trustees that there are improvements in this area of the Museum's activity, and that a new Head of Learning will start at the Museum in June. The increases to the web figures are due to more teachers using the resources available as educational aids and to plan their lessons.

Visitor numbers: Ms Candlin confirmed that the number of visitors has fallen slightly from the initial going free novelty of the previous year, and that as crowding is becoming less of an issue, more visitors are using the catering facilities on offer in the Museum. Trustees were also informed that the Earth from the Air Exhibition in the front gardens has received an estimated 1 million visitors.

Finance: Mr Greenwood confirmed that the provisional financial outturn is robust and that it is greater than the figure that had been used in developing the Corporate Plan.

Human resources: Mr Hill commented that the sick leave is continuing to stay low, and that the turnover rate is what would be expected in the current economic climate. Mr Hill also confirmed that the HR database is now operational, it will enable further interrogation of records, and assist in management developing a better understanding of Human Resource issues.

724 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next board meeting will take place on Tuesday 22 July at 10.00 at The Natural History Museum. Trustees also noted that the summer party would take place on the lawns on Thursday, 17 July.