

No 219

THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

AT A MEETING ON

TUESDAY 24 NOVEMBER 2009

AT 9.30 A.M.

AT THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

Present

TRUSTEES

Oliver Stocken (in the Chair)
Professor Sir Roy Anderson FRS FMedSci
Louise Charlton
Professor David Drewry
Professor Dianne Edwards CBE FRS
Professor Alex Halliday FRS
Ian Henderson CBE
Professor Georgina Mace CBE FRS
Sir David Omand GCB

In Attendance

Dr Michael Dixon	Director
Sharon Ament	Director of Public Engagement
Joe Baker	Special Advisor
Paul Brereton	Director of Human Resources
Rachael Casstles	Special Advisor
Anna Cuss (Minutes)	Executive Assistant to the Director and Secretary to the Board
Neil Greenwood	Director of Finance and Administration
	Programme Director, Darwin Centre Phase Two
Professor Richard Lane	Director of Science
David Sanders	Director of Estates
Teresa Wild	Director of Policy and Planning and NHM Tring
John Jackson	Science Policy Coordinator (<i>minute 1246 (ii) only</i>)

Closed session

1233 SENIOR MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

Trustees met in closed session with only the Director and Ms Cuss in attendance. With Darwin Centre Phase Two now complete and launched to the public, the Director outlined draft plans which would enable the Museum to address the next phase in its development and to meet future challenges. Within these plans was a recommendation to make changes to the senior management structure to assist the Museum in moving forward.

Trustees made a number of suggestions which would be incorporated into a final proposal for their approval early in 2010.

Open session

1234 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Daniel Alexander, Dr Derek Langslow and Professor Jacqueline McGlade. It was unfortunate that Professor McGlade was unable to attend, since this would have been her last meeting before retiring from the Board on 31 December 2009. Nevertheless, formal thanks were recorded to Professor McGlade for her contribution to the Museum over the past eight years.

1235 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 14 JULY 2009

The minutes of the meeting of the Trustees held on 14 July 2009 were confirmed as a true record.

1236 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MEETING OF 14 JULY 2009 (TP 09/60)

Trustees' Strategy Day

It had been confirmed that the Trustees' Strategy Day would now be held on Thursday 23 September, rather than Thursday 17 June, which would allow for better spacing between Board meetings and also assist in the corporate planning process.

Museum Pay Remit for 2008/09

Following a ballot the Museum's trade unions, PCS and Prospect, had voted in favour of accepting the pay offer. Back-pay related to the pay award due on 1 August 2008 was credited to bank accounts on 14 August 2009. Staff received a separate payslip associated with this payment. The pay award due on 1 August 2009 was implemented in the normal August pay run.

Annual Report and Accounts 2008/09

Following endorsement by the Board, the Report and Accounts had been given Ministerial approval and were laid before Parliament on 21 July 2009.

Exhibition Road Project

The first stage of works around South Kensington underground station had progressed significantly and completion was imminent. The improvements to visitor safety were clear. There had been no movement on the issue of step-free access at the station itself, but the general consensus amongst stakeholders was that this was highly desirable and that a campaign to try to secure it was essential.

All other items of significance were addressed under the current agenda.

1237 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman reported on matters relating to appointments to the Board. A decision on the reappointment of Sir David Omand, who would be eligible for reappointment on 19 January 2010, and replacement of Professor McGlade were both currently under discussion with the Minister. Any developments would be reported to Trustees as they arose.

1238 DIRECTOR'S REPORT (TP 09/61)

The Director highlighted four items from his report:

Theft of specimens from The Natural History Museum at Tring

Trustees had been informed individually by the Director in July of the theft of a number of bird specimens from the Natural History Museum at Tring. Since that time, an audit report had been completed and investigative work had been carried out in collaboration with the local police force. Mr Thorpe's report had been discussed in detail by the Audit and Risk Committee on 10 November, but broadly, Trustees were informed that steps had been taken to improve security at Tring. In addition, the discussion was being broadened to incorporate the security of all collections, and the balance which needed to be struck with access to them. Mr Thorpe was working with the Museum's Collections Committee to take some of the report's recommendations forward.

Since it fell within their statutory duties, Trustees welcomed this report. The Board reiterated their strong commitment to the proper care of the collections and asked to be kept informed of any other developments.

In addition to the theft from Tring there had also been a number of minor cash thefts within the Museum, which had all been identified by the Museum's internal control mechanisms. The thefts had all been dealt with appropriately and vigilance would be increased to limit any future occurrences.

Plans to accommodate reduced Government grant-in-aid

The Museum's senior management team had met in October to progress plans for the 2010/11 budget and for the new Corporate Plan for 2011/12-15/16. Trustees endorsed the two corporate priorities which had been identified for the next twelve months, namely maximising the benefits from Darwin Centre and preparing a strategic response to possible changes to funding due to the challenging economic climate. This latter priority was now being progressed as a formal Programme, using Programme Management methodology as routinely applied across the Museum. The Museum's capital grant in aid allocation for 2009/10 and 2010/11 had still not been confirmed, but likely impacts had been incorporated into the draft budget.

Intellectual Territory

Although the paper had been scheduled for consideration at the Strategy Day in June, there had been insufficient time to discuss it, therefore the paper was presented again to Trustees. The Museum's Intellectual Territory formed part of the brand development work which was being carried out. It provided the subject areas where the Museum had authority and expertise, and might proactively communicate to its stakeholders in order to change perceptions about what we do. It also set the parameters for establishing public programme, permanent and special exhibition content.

Trustees were broadly in agreement with the paper as set out, though they recognised that there was a further dimension to it, which was not articulated, in terms of agreeing audiences and mode of engagement with them. The document, however, was a flexible one to allow adaptation to fluctuation in current issues and it would be revised on a rolling basis.

Recent awards

The Museum had recently been successful at the Visit London Awards, winning the Evening Standard's Best London for Free Experience (People's Choice Award), a gold award for Marketing/PR Campaign of the year (for the Darwin Exhibition campaign) and a silver award for Business Venue of the Year. In addition, at the Premises & Facilities Management (pfm) awards, the Museum had been recognised for its work with Partners in Public Access Facilities.

Trustees commended all those involved in achieving this valuable recognition. They noted that submissions for architectural awards were also being made for the Darwin Centre, now that it was complete and open.

1239 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REGISTER OF INTERESTS (TP 09/62)

There were no declarations of interest.

1240 FINANCE

(i) Financial Review for April to September 2009 (TP 09/63)

Trustees noted the report, which showed that the forecast outturn for the General Fund was broadly in line with the original budget. A further detailed review of income and expenditure forecasts would be undertaken in January 2010.

(ii) Draft budget for 2010/11 (TP 09/64)

Mr Greenwood presented a balanced operating budget for 2010-11 and indicative budget allocations for the period from 2011-12 to 2013-14. The budget had been prepared with the context of continuing uncertainty over future grant in aid, particularly the likelihood of a significant reduction from 2011-12 onwards. Plans had been developed to deliver expenditure savings to match the reduction and funds had been provided during 2010-11 to enable the savings to be realised. In addition, consideration had been given to how to manage the risk of cuts beyond those planned for, and the steps that could be taken. The budget also took account of the provisional allocations determined in previous year in accordance with corporate planning priorities, and allocations similarly prioritised at the senior management team conference in October 2009, when the capital budget was effectively re-based.

In discussion, Trustees acknowledged the difficulties ahead, and agreed that the plans outlined in the paper to address them were proportionate and necessary. They also endorsed the expenditure review programme which was being established to identify priority areas for spending. The principles defining the review were of particular importance, especially the intention to protect front line services and to ensure that the capital expenditure to position the Museum in the longer term should not be sacrificed for short-term expediency. All functions must be fit for purpose and benchmarked against relevant comparators.

As it was now complete and open to the public, Trustees requested further analysis at their next meeting, on running costs for Darwin Centre Phase Two, specifically the actual cost against the original budgeted cost.

In conclusion, Trustees approved the balanced budget for 2010-11 and noted the provisional allocations for 2011-14.

(iii) Maintenance of the Museum Estate (TP 09/65)

Mr Sanders presented a review of expenditure on estates maintenance over the past four years which provided context for current and future expenditure plans. Trustees welcomed the report and recognised the increased investment and improvements to management of the estate over recent years. They also acknowledged the need for continued investment to ensure the long term future of the estate.

In connection with the report, Trustees requested a further update on progress with managing the Museum's carbon footprint for presentation at their next meeting.

1241 PERFORMANCE SCORECARD – CORPORATE KPIs TO END OF SECOND QUARTER 2009/10 (TP 09/66)

Ms Wild presented the report. Visitor numbers to the Museum had increased by 1.6% compared to the same period in the previous year, with the Darwin Centre making a major impact on attendance figures. It was highly likely that the Museum would achieve 4 million visits in the current calendar year. However, the number of visitors under 16 had fallen by 7.2% on the same period last year. This was of concern and could be due to a number of factors, including an increase in the number of overseas visitors who tended to visit without children. Comparisons would be made on full year trends and further research might be necessary. On a more positive note, the number of children taking part in organised educational sessions had increased by 5.7% year on year.

Trustees remarked upon the rather disappointing number of visitors to NHM touring exhibitions and enquired whether this was due to the types of exhibition on offer, or their suitability for touring. It was noted that the Museum was dependent upon host institutions to market exhibitions effectively and to measure visitors accurately. However, the Museum was also taking steps to extend the life of touring exhibitions by updating them periodically.

1242 HUMAN RESOURCES

- (i) Health and Safety Report for the period April-October 2009 (TP 09/67)
The report was noted. There had been no RIDDOR reportable accidents in the past three months.

1243 DARWIN CENTRE

- (ii) Management Report (TP 09/68)
Trustees considered the most recent report, which had most recently been considered by the Audit & Risk Committee on 10 November 2009. The public offer had opened to schedule on 15 September and there were now only minor snagging works to be completed. Good progress had been made on the external landscaping now that the nesting bird issue had been resolved and it was hoped that it would be complete before Christmas. There were no financial issues.

The Angela Marmont Centre for UK Biodiversity was scheduled to open in the first quarter of 2010/11.

- (ii) Public Offer Progress Report (TP 09/69)
The formal opening of the Darwin Centre on 14 September by HRH Prince William of Wales and Sir David Attenborough had been a huge success, with good attendance from our major supporters, including the majority of Trustees, the Culture Minister and Shadow Culture Minister and a number of key donors. The level of positive media coverage had been exceptional and the occasion demonstrated what could be achieved by working together in a consolidated way.

Since opening, there had been encouraging feedback from the public and from Government and the Centre had hosted visits from various high-level national and international delegations, including the President of India, Smt Pratibha Devesingh Patil, as part of a State Visit to the UK, and The Rt Hon Hilary Benn MP, Secretary of State for the Environment, who gave the 10th Annual Darwin Initiative Lecture at the Museum,

In terms of admissions, the total number of visits to South Kensington since the Darwin Centre opened had increased by 43% against the same period last year. Of these, 216,491 visited the Darwin Centre. An enhanced schools programme was launched in mid October incorporating new activities on offer in the Darwin Centre. Work was now in progress to monitor Darwin Centre against the Benefits Realisation objectives to enable the longer-term impact to be measured one year after opening.

In conclusion, Trustees wished that their great pleasure in seeing the Darwin Centre open to such critical acclaim, be recorded. It was enormously gratifying for all concerned, particularly those staff and donors who had contributed so much towards bringing the Darwin Centre to fruition, to witness its huge success. Trustees recorded their grateful thanks to everyone who had been involved in making the Darwin Centre possible.

1244 AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE REPORT

- (i) Report of the meeting held on 10 November 2009

Sir David Omand, as Chairman of the Committee, gave an oral report on the main items covered by the meeting:

Thefts – cash and specimen thefts which were previously mentioned in the Director's Report were considered in depth by the Committee with an emphasis upon the need for an adequate balance between access to the collections and their security. Trustees asked Professor Lane to provide them with an update on the security procedures in place for collections in due course.

Crisis Management Post Exercise Report – the exercise had been extremely useful and had provided the Crisis Management Team and the Board with an assurance that the Museum had a team which understood the operations of the Museum and had the confidence to make sound judgements in a time of crisis. The staff were to be congratulated. However, there were still some lessons to be learned and these were being addressed. It was hoped that further exercises would be held focussing on other elements of crisis management.

Corporate risks – the Committee had reviewed the Museum's seventh corporate risk relating to delivery of an appropriate level of security in a changing environment. A report and recommendations on the future management of security would be considered by the senior management team in December. It was clear that a permanent Head of Security was required whichever option was followed.

Minutes of the meeting would be circulated separately to Trustees at the earliest opportunity.

1245 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT GROUP

- (i) Second Quarter Update 2009/10 (TP 09/70)
Ms Ament highlighted a number of items from her report:

Exhibitions - *After Darwin: Contemporary Expressions*, the Museum's first charged for arts/science collaboration had not proved as successful as anticipated. Therefore, after a few months of very low visitor numbers, the charge was withdrawn. The exhibition consequently exceeded its target for visitor numbers. The lessons learned from this exercise would be reviewed, but it was likely that arts/science subjects could be better served within a programme of activities.

Since the last meeting, both the *Veolia Environnement Wildlife Photographer of the Year* exhibition and the Ice Rink had opened to visitors. Progress reports on both would be provided to future meetings.

BBC Documentary – filming for the series 'Museum of Life' had reached an intense level. The series was conceived as a returnable magazine format using a core team of knowledgeable presenters in the style of the BBC's *Coast* series. It was not possible to view any footage at the meeting, but Trustees were informed that the programmes were likely to be aired in late March. The Museum would aim to tie in its physical offer with what was shown on television (via an informal exhibition 'Science Portals') and would therefore need to be as flexible as possible once the actual scheduling was confirmed.

Membership – the scheme was being expanded in an attempt to build a broader base of loyal supporters. A key element of this work was the new magazine *Evolve*. The magazine was more closely linked to the Museum's brand and was of higher quality to allow sales of subscriptions and copies from the shop, as well as, eventually from the high street. Initial feedback was promising.

Trustees noted the report.

(ii) **5-year Special Exhibitions Programme (TP 09/71)**

Ms Ament presented a 5-year rolling programme for Special Exhibitions. The plan was the result of work by the Public Programme Group and incorporated ideas from across the Museum as well as external hire opportunities. Some of the proposed exhibitions had already been market-tested.

Trustees reviewed and endorsed the five principles for the programme which broadly addressed issues of brand, audience engagement and learning, frequency, admission charge and budget and a partnership approach.

The Board also received a presentation which illustrated some of the design and content of the proposed programme and made the following comments.

- the issue of climate change was not addressed directly by any of the exhibitions. Ms Ament explained that a significant new gallery on climate change was to be opened at the Science Museum and that therefore something similar at the NHM would be duplication. Although some of the proposed exhibitions would include a significant element on climate change, it was far better to incorporate the issue across all exhibitions since it affects everything we do and is likely to do so increasingly in the future.
- With specific reference to 2012, Trustees agreed that the Museum should, in the run up and during the 2012 London Olympic Games, use its grounds for a special exhibition, rather than release them for commercial hire. They felt that, although it was not currently planned, it would be desirable to have something on display during 2012 that linked directly to the Olympics. Ms Ament would, at the May meeting, provide plans for the proposed Olympic offer within the South Kensington/Exhibition Road cultural area, with details of how this would link in to the Cultural Olympiad across London.

Trustees approved the draft plan and asked for future updates on a rolling basis.

(iii) **International Year of Biodiversity Update (TP 09/72)**

Trustees received a report from Dr Bob Bloomfield, Head of Special Projects and Innovation, on activities for the International Year of Biodiversity (IYB). With support from Defra, the Museum was leading a UK-wide partnership for the year, modelled on the successful Darwin200 experience. Currently, the partner base included over 160 members representing more than 600 organisations. A public VIP launch at the Museum would be taking place at the Museum on 25 November, hosted by the Minister for Biodiversity, Huw Irranca-Davies MP, and Dr Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The Museum would aim to integrate its work in 2010 towards the biodiversity theme, both to achieve the communication goals of IYB and to further enhance its own reputation in this area.

Trustees were supportive of the broad plans presented and noted the programme of events which were planned. They commended Dr Bloomfield and his staff for their ongoing work on this important initiative.

1246 SCIENCE GROUP

(i) **Second Quarter Update 2009/10 (TP 09/73)**

Professor Lane focussed on a number of points from the report:

Library Strategic Review – Professor Drewry, as Chair of the Review Group, gave a brief summary of the initial findings of the review, which had taken place between 18 and 20 November. A full report would be presented to Trustees in February 2010.

Performance – Trustees were provided with a detailed analysis of grant income over the past five years. Overall, the value to the NHM of new grants during this period increased year on year to 2007/08, but then fell disappointingly in 2008/09. This was accompanied by a reduction in success rates. Whilst it was difficult to see any systematic trends in these data, it was clear that improvements would need to be made and every effort was being made to assist staff in achieving better results. Trustees noted, nevertheless, that two large consortium grants – both worth over £1 million to the Museum - had been won during this period, for the Open Air Laboratories (OPAL) scheme and for Synthesys2 (a follow up to the Synthesys project to create an integrated European infrastructure for researchers in the natural sciences).

Tamdakht Meteorite – the Museum had been fortunate in acquiring the complete stone of the Tamdakht meteorite (1407g) – a witnessed fall on 20 December 2008 in the Atlas Mountains of Morocco.

House of Lord Science & Technology Committee Report on Taxonomy 2008 – the Museum had won an important contract from the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) to review the current status of taxonomy in the UK as part of the Research Council's response to the Committee report on taxonomy. The team was being led by Dr Geoff Boxshall FRS. The Museum would report its findings to NERC in summer 2010. This was an important piece of work for the Museum as the leading taxonomic institute in the country.

(ii) **NHM Human Remains Policy (TP 09/74)**

Further to their discussion at the July meeting, Trustees considered a final draft of the policy that took account of their earlier views. The draft focussed on the policy in a strict sense, the earlier procedural and information elements having been removed for separate development.

Trustees confirmed that the policy should, in documents giving guidance and information on the Museum's position, be accompanied by a preface and other interpretation to provide context. The policy should also be accompanied by a statement to the effect that it would be reviewed in the light of experience over time.

Trustees agreed that views should be sought on the draft policy with respect to clarity: Professor Mace agreed to discuss this further with staff. It was noted that the current draft was the product of consultation and discussion with Mr Alexander.

Trustees agreed that the detailed procedures should be developed separately. They requested that Professor Mace and Mr Alexander be consulted and give their approval to procedures relating to requests for return, testing, and data collection. Approval of the policy was contingent upon these annexes being reviewed by Professor Mace and Mr Alexander and, therefore, Trustees requested confirmation when these steps had been taken. If this course of action were followed, it was agreed that there was no requirement for the policy to be reviewed again by Trustees.

Finally, Professor Lane confirmed that a request for return from the Torres Straits Islanders was due to be considered by the Human Remains Advisory Panel shortly and a recommendation would be submitted to Trustees in May 2010 for their final decision.

1247 AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE BOARD MEETINGS (TP 09/75)

The rolling agenda for future meetings was noted.

1248 EVENTS DIARY (TP 09/76)

The events diary was noted.

1249 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no items.

1250 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 23 February 2010 at 0930 at The Natural History Museum.

1251 COORDINATION OF SCIENTIFIC COLLECTIONS (TP 09/76)

To inform their 'science session' following the meeting, Trustees received a paper from Professor Lane which outlined a project that had been developed over the past two years, under the auspices of the OECD Global Science Forum, to explore the opportunities for coordinating the activities of scientific collections in order to increase their impact. A unifying project was being developed to identify collections that could be used to answer broad scientific questions on changing. There were moves

to establish an international organisation to share best practice in the development and management of scientific collections and to promote interdisciplinary research using materials in these collections.

Whilst the UK had many important scientific collections, there was no strategic coordination of these vital research infrastructures. Trustees were invited to debate whether the Museum should invest time and effort to take the lead in promoting the coordination of scientific collections within the UK, and if so how it might proceed.