

No 252

THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

AT A MEETING ON

TUESDAY 4 JULY 2017

AT 09.00 A.M.

AT THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

Present

TRUSTEES

Lord Green of Hurstpierpoint (in the Chair)
Dame Frances Cairncross DBE FRSE
Professor Christopher Gilligan CBE
Professor Sir John Holman KBE
Hilary Newiss
Robert Noel
Simon Patterson
Professor Robert Stephen John Sparks FRS CBE
Professor Dame Janet Thornton DBE FRS

In Attendance

Executive Board:

Sir Michael Dixon (Director)
Neil Greenwood (Director of Finance and Corporate Services)
Dr Justin Morris (Director of Public Engagement)
Fiona McWilliams (Director of Development and Communications)
Professor Ian Owens (Director of Science)

In attendance:

Frances Allen (Board Secretary)
Rachael Castles (Head of Internal Affairs)
Dr Sarah Long (Museum Registrar) – for item 9
Keith Jennings (Head of Masterplanning and Projects) – for item 11
Kate Fielding (Head of Strategic Communications) – for item 12

Preliminary

1904 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Mr Anand Mahindra, Dr Kim Winser and Professor Sir John Beddington CMG FRS.

1905 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REGISTER OF INTERESTS (TP 17/35)

Declarations of interest and changes to the Register of Interests were made and recorded by the Secretary to the Board.

1906 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 16 MAY 2017

The Minutes of the meeting of the Trustees held on 16 May 2017 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

1907 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MEETING OF 16 MAY 2017 (TP 17/36)

Organisational charts: The Board would find it useful if numbers were attributed to the departments in order to gain a sense of where the main body of staff reside.

Legal provision: The Executive Board had reviewed the provision of legal services to the Museum and concluded that the volume of legal work now being undertaken at the NHM supported the appointment of an in-house lawyer. The role will provide a service across the Museum and will report to Neil Greenwood as Director of Finance and Corporate Services. The recruitment process will be undertaken by Ms Rachael Casstles (Head of Internal Affairs) and Mr Greenwood with advisory input from Hilary Newiss.

Corporate items:

1908 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Submission to Government: The working group had met to begin the process of constructing a case to Government for continued support of major London institutions. The Chair will ensure that the submission reflects that the NHM is different from other cultural London institutions due to its substantial science/academic base and its policy commitment to matters relating to the environment.

1909 DIRECTOR'S REPORT (TP 17/37)

The Director highlighted the following items from his report:

Security measures: In response to recent terrorist activity, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) had installed granite blocks in Exhibition Road as a temporary deterrent for vehicle-borne attacks. The three South Kensington museums will be lobbying RBKC to take the longer-term measure of fully pedestrianising and installing more robust barriers in Exhibition Road.

Global Directors' Group for natural history museums (hosted by the Denver Museum of Nature and Science): The spring meeting focussed on the "One World Collection" project, which sought to build a consortium to create an open knowledge platform to organise the information about the natural environment contained in the world's natural history museums. The aim is to make this data universally accessible, providing a useful tool for tackling scientific and societal challenges. The collected meta-data revealed that the twelve members of the Group hold circa 40% of all collections and it is estimated that 90% could be achieved by adding only another 47 institutions. The next step is to approach these 47 institutions and invite them to participate in the study.

The Chair believed this to be an exciting project and collating this level of information in digital form is perhaps unprecedented. Notwithstanding, it is of profound importance that a project of this complexity should be underpinned by a robust governance structure.

1910 FINANCIAL REVIEW FOR THE PERIOD APRIL - MAY 2017 (TP 17/38)

Mr Greenwood (Director of Finance and Corporate Services) presented the financial review for the first two months of FY2017/18, which reflected the underlying trend of performance associated with the closure of Hintze Hall. The Board noted the report and acknowledged the early warning of budget pressures on expenditure outlined by Mr Greenwood.

Items for Approval:

1911 FY 2016/17 ANNUAL ACCOUNTS APPROVAL (TP 17/39)

The Audit and Risk Committee had reviewed the NHM's Annual Report and Accounts FY 2016/17, together with the consolidated accounts for the NHM Trading Company Limited, the NHM Special Funds Trust and the NHM Benevolent Fund at its meeting on 29 June and recommended approval by the Board of Trustees. In response to the Committee's endorsement, the Board approved the Annual Report and consolidated accounts for signature by the Chair and Director for formal submission to the Comptroller and Auditor General at the National Audit Office.

1912 EXHIBITION LOAN REQUEST FROM THE MUSÉE DE L'HOMME (TP 17/40)

Dr Sarah Long (Museum Registrar) and Lorraine Cornish (Head of Conservation) presented a loan request from the Musée de l'Homme, Paris for the Forbes Quarry Neanderthal Skull (*Homo neanderthalensis*) for a forthcoming exhibition, which is expected to run from April to December 2018. This Hominin skull is recognised as being one of the Museum's most scientifically significant items and it features as a star object in the permanent Human Evolution Gallery. The skull is also central to a study being undertaken by a lead researcher at the Museum and its loan would make it unavailable for the NHM to use in the publicity associated with the study's publication in 2018. Loaning the specimen for such a long period also conflicts with a series of other NHM activities.

Based on these factors, the Board declined the request, but suggested the alternative solution of offering to create a high-fidelity cast of the skull (at a cost to be borne by the Musée de l'Homme).

1913 UPDATE ON TREASURES OBJECTS (TP 17/41)

In March 2017 the Museum sent a number of specimens to Tokyo for the exhibition "*Treasures of the Natural World*" - the first in a new series of specimen rich, high end natural history touring exhibitions. The items included some of the Museum's most significant specimens, many of which presented challenges due to size, composition and/or fragility. Indeed, the Tokyo experience had enabled the conservation and touring teams to learn more about how certain types of complex items are packed and how they travel. The paper presented by Dr Long and Ms Cornish provided an update on the safety of the items during the Tokyo exhibition and the lessons learned as the exhibition moves to Singapore.

Generally, it was felt that the measures taken to protect the objects from damage proved successful with only a few specimens sustaining minor damage. Two items incurred damage of medium significance and these specimens may be recalled to South Kensington for remedial work to be undertaken. Damage to specimens is typically caused by sudden shocks during transportation, which is a risk when items are moved between planes when couriers cannot be present to oversee the movement. The inclusion of vibration monitors in shipments may be considered as an added precaution for future touring exhibitions. In conclusion, lessons learned from the experience will inform the future procedure for touring exhibitions, including the way specimens are mounted so as to withstand the rigours of touring and whether skeletal specimens should be transported on mounts.

The Board thanked Dr Long and Ms Cornish for providing such a concise report and also for the team's invaluable contribution to this very success exhibition. At some future date the Board would welcome some "dashboard data" on the performance of *Treasures*. The Chair reflected that the *Treasures* exhibition has dramatically raised the Museum's profile and presents a model that can be used as a template for the future. In addition, the Chair looked forward to continuing to build on the relationships established as a result of *Treasures*.

1914 TEMPORARY REMOVAL OF LOW-USE LIBRARY COLLECTIONS TO THE BRITISH LIBRARY, BOSTON SPA STORAGE FACILITY (TP 17/42)

The Board endorsed the decision to temporarily relocate the low-use Library collection to the British Library facility at Boston Spa recognising that without the relocation the Museum is unable to move forward with other key strategic projects. The temporary location will be on a five-year basis, but the Board will review in three years' time.

Items for Noting:**1915 REVIEW OF GROUNDS TRANSFORMATION PROJECT (TP 17/43)**

Keith Jennings (Head of Masterplanning and Projects) presented an update on the Grounds Transformation Project following the Board's request for a thorough review of the project to ensure its alignment with the current priorities. A working group (comprising senior management and Trustees Robert Noel and Hilary Newiss) had examined the broader objectives of the project, together with its ranking in the prioritised list of projects identified by the Museum. The group's first meeting had focussed on how the project could be contained within an affordable budget envelope whilst retaining its overarching vision and, to help with the review, a consultancy practice had been engaged to evaluate the buildability and to undertake a cost study. The draft findings of this study will be submitted to the Property Committee at the end of August.

The review also provided the opportunity to evaluate the fundraising strategy in light of recent fundraising activity outlined by Ms Fiona McWilliams (Director of Development and Communications). Ms McWilliams and Prof Ian Owens (Director of Science) had attended a follow-up meeting with a major funding organisation following its rejection of a funding application. The organisation was very positive about the ethos of the scheme and encouraged the Museum to re-submit a funding application in December. Undoubtedly, the project will boost the profile of the NHM and will act as a springboard to build bigger donor networks. It will also have a national impact through its citizen science and outreach activities, which will be trialled in the grounds and rolled out to its UK partnerships. Through this work the Museum can create new (and cement existing) partnerships in the regions.

1916 WANDSWORTH FEASIBILITY STUDY – COLLECTIONS PROGRAMME (TP 17/44)

Uncertainty in the property market post-Brexit had stalled any hope of working in partnership with a commercial developer to move the collections offsite. In response the Museum had explored the alternative option of redeveloping the Wandsworth site as an offsite storage facility. As a first step, a feasibility study was undertaken on the Wandsworth site and the options were presented to the Board.

The feasibility study established that the Museum could achieve a net usable collection storage area of approximately 25,000m² over five floors at a total project cost of circa £110m. The scheme also provides the capability to create more floor space by excavating basement levels and would tackle approximately 80% of the Museum's current collections storage issues. The collections that have been identified for relocation represent collections that are heavily used by the scientific community and, as such, it is necessary to stay within the M25 so as to provide easy and speedy retrieval. This option, however, was not without potential problems, including:

- The space requirements are taken from current understanding and previous report and does not allow for any margin of error;
- There would be no public-facing facility envisaged in this space; it would just provide for collections storage;
- It is assumed that the overall timescale would be five years, which includes an allowance of two years for relocating the collection to temporary facilities during the construction phase and recanting.

Ms McWilliams confirmed that the current five-year planning period does not include the longer term plan to develop an Earth and Planetary Science Centre (EPSC). The fundraising team had come to the conclusion that the cost of this capital build was large (circa £120m) and would cannibalise the fundraising efforts for other priority projects. The Board noted that the priority projects in the next five-year planning period are a strategic decision yet to be made and the EPSC may be considered at this time.

The Board endorsed the proposal to carry out further investigation of options to inform the strategic outline case for the development of Wandsworth. In addition, as this is clearly a significant and strategic issue, the topic will be added to the agenda for the Annual Trustees' Strategy Day within the context of the collections programme.

1917 HINTZE HALL VIP BRIEFING (TP 17/45)

Kate Fielding (Head of Strategic Communications) provided a briefing, together with key messages, for the VIP launch of Hintze Hall.

1918 MUSEUM SURVEY 2017 (TP 17/46)

The staff engagement survey, conducted in February 2017, had been designed through a process of staff consultation and posited a number of questions around engagement drivers and blockers, as well as questions related to the *Strategy to 2020*. All Museum colleagues were invited to participate and the response level was in line with previous years.

Although the overall results were positive, there was strong negative scoring around leadership engagement, clarity of strategy and direction across the Museum. In response to these criticisms, an action plan - focussing on leadership, communication/sharing information and policy - had been created to help improve communication and create more opportunities for staff to feel comfortable when interacting with senior management. The survey also provided the opportunity to compare the 2017 results with those from the 2015 survey to determine the efficacy of the action plan initiatives that were implemented at that time.

The Board thanked the Executive for the presentation and recommended that another survey is conducted in one year's time.

1919 ANNUAL TRUSTEES' STRATEGY DAY - TOPICS

Three topics agreed were:

1. Collections storage and the Estate;
2. Science Review
3. Brand development

Annual Reports for Noting:

1920 AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17 (TP 17/47)

The Board noted the contents of the Annual Report, which supports the Annual Accounts 2016/17.

Committee reports:

1921 REPORT FROM THE AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 29 JUNE 2017

Ms Newiss reported on the main focus for the discussion in June was consideration of the annual accounts. Ms Newiss confirmed that sufficient assurance had been given to enable the Committee to recommend to the Board that the annual accounts be approved.

1922 REPORT AND MINUTES OF THE DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 8 JUNE 2017 (TP 17/48)

Dame Frances Cairncross (Chair of the NHM Development Advisory Committee) reported on the June meeting, highlighting the following:

Fundraising: The level of secured funding in the first quarter of 2017/18 is extremely encouraging and provided confidence that the new fundraising model was the right approach to take.

Extractives update: The revised statement setting out how the NHM works with extractive companies had been circulated to the Committee. Once approved, the statement will be posted on the NHM internet site.

1923 REPORT AND MINUTES OF THE PROPERTY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 8 JUNE 2017 (TP 17/49)

Mr Robert Noel (Chair of the Property Committee) reported that the meeting had focussed on the major strategic projects, particularly the work streams required to take these forward and developing the team to work as an *intelligent client*.

1924 AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE BOARD MEETINGS (TP 17/50)

The Board of Trustees noted the contents of the report.

1925 EVENTS DIARY (TP 17/51)

The Board of Trustees noted the contents of the report.

1926 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

2017:

- 19 September (Annual Trustees' Strategy Day – all day)
- 21 November

2018:

- 13 February
- 24 May (NOTE NEW DATE AND LOCATION TBA IN BIRMINGHAM)
- 3 July (Annual Staff Summer party in the evening)
- 18 September (Annual Trustees' Strategy Day – all day)
- 20 November

1927 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

External Science Review, June 2017: Dame Janet Thornton and Prof Stephen Sparks reported on the recent external review of NHM scientific activities. The Visiting Group had been asked to provide a report to Trustees on the current quality and impact of science, reflecting on the future development of activities in light of international comparators, strategic objectives and external opportunities. The main points arising from the review focused on collections and digitisation. The Visiting Group viewed collections as the bedrock of NHM science and hence collections storage was of paramount importance. Linked to this was the need to accelerate the digitisation of collections.

In conclusion, Dame Janet and Prof Sparks felt that the review had been a success and will provide a good platform to progress science and to address some of the wider issues for the NHM. The recommendations arising from the review, together with the management response, will be considered at the Annual Trustees' Strategy Day.

Dr Justin Morris: The Board offered thanks to Dr Justin Morris, Director of Public Engagement, who departs the Museum in July to take on a new role. The Chair complimented Dr Morris on transforming public engagement in the NHM during his tenure. The Director also expressed thanks, on behalf of the Executive Board, for being constantly positive and providing an excellent contribution to discussions.

