

No 253

THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

AT A MEETING ON

TUESDAY 21 NOVEMBER 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
Dr Kim L Winser OBE

In Attendance

Sir Michael Dixon (Director)
Neil Greenwood (Director of Finance and Corporate Services)
Dr Alex Burch, Head of Exhibitions, Learning and Outreach (PEG representative)
Fiona McWilliams (Director of Development and Communications)
Professor Ian Owens (Director of Science)

Frances Allen (Board Secretary)
Rachael Casstles (Head of Internal Affairs)

Preliminary

1928 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Mr Anand Mahindra and Professor Sir John Beddington CMG FRS.

1929 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REGISTER OF INTERESTS (TP 17/52)

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

1930 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 4 JULY 2017

The Minutes of the meeting of the Trustees held on 4 July 2017 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

1931 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MEETING OF 4 JULY 2017 (TP 17/53)

Organisational charts: Rachael Casstles, Head of Internal Affairs, will circulate the required information.

Corporate items:

1932 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Museum is at a difficult stage faced with the challenge of accommodating short-term financial pressures whilst addressing strategic ambitions, including the digitisation of collections. Advancing this particular strand of activity will be perhaps influenced by the Museums Review, which calls for more coordination in the UK for digitisation and the way cultural heritage is presented to the public.

1933 DIRECTOR'S REPORT (TP 17/54)

The Director highlighted the following items:

Director of Engagement: Following an extensive global search process, the Director was pleased to announce the appointment of Clare Matterson as Director of Engagement.

Exhibition Road safety and security: The Directors of the V&A, Science Museum and the NHM have written to the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) asking them to consider pedestrianising the southern end of Exhibition Road or to otherwise protect visitors to this area. The Director, as Co-Chair of the Exhibition Road Cultural Group (ERCG), had engaged with RBKC via correspondence and meetings with councillors but, despite certain assurances, progress has been slow. The Board considers public safety as paramount, so all haste should be taken to progress a resolution.

Board Assurance framework: It was agreed that a report on the mitigation of major risks would be submitted to the Board on a quarterly basis but, owing to the Head of Audit and Risk being on sick leave, a template had not been developed in time for the November meeting. This will be submitted to the Board in February. The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee asked that the Board in future be sent the same report as seen by members of the Audit and Risk Committee.

DCMS Museums review: The Director will write a short summary about opportunities and challenges arising from the review and circulate this to Board when the way forward is clear.

Digital update: Simon Patterson reported that good progress has been made over the last six-month period and the future looks very encouraging. However, Mr Patterson cautioned that investment in the Museum's digital activities needs to continue if this rate of progress is to be maintained. It was agreed that the Chief Digital and Product Officer will be invited to present an update to the Board at a future meeting.

Museum Attendance:

Visitor numbers following the relaunch of Hintze Hall had not increased at the anticipated rate, which in turn had had a negative effect on commercial performance. As the first step to understand the root cause for the slow recovery, the Executive Board and the Audience Insight team had investigated possible underlying reasons through audience surveys and comparative data of peer organisations.

The Director outlined the results of the investigation and concluded that, in considering strategic measures to increase visitor attendance, an external review of the Museum's commercial offer is required before the incoming Director of Engagement takes up her appointment. This holistic review would embrace the food and retail outlets as well as temporary exhibitions, particularly whether an alternative commercial model should be explored that would attract a wider audience. In taking this forward, the Museum needed to be clear about the objectives of temporary exhibitions and whether the target setting is realistic.

1934 FINANCIAL REVIEW FOR THE PERIOD APRIL - OCTOBER 2017 (TP 17/55)

Neil Greenwood, Director of Finance and Corporate Services, presented the financial review for the period April-October 2017, which reflected the challenges and pressures associated with attendance and associated visitor-related income. Mr Greenwood outlined the actions that had been implemented to protect the level of Operating Surplus and General Reserve going forward.

1935 FY2018/19 BUDGET PREPARATION (TP 17/56)

In previous years the budget had been submitted to the Board for approval in November but, in light of emerging financial challenges, the Executive wished to spend more time in developing a strategically coherent budget to be presented to the Board in February. In constructing a budget, efforts will be made to reduce short-term expenditure to protect, where possible, the FY2017/18 operating surplus in order to aid future investment in specific strategic priorities. The Director outlined some of the proposed measures to address key issues in the short and medium-term and acknowledged that these should not impede the Museum's long-term goals.

The Director suggested that the way financial information is currently presented to the Board does not entirely explain the link between investment and ongoing strategic priorities and so he proposed to develop an alternative model that would link financial outcomes to strategic priorities. This would also provide the opportunity to review the real costs of some Museum activities and will highlight those areas that need to be considered in managing profit and loss to operating surplus.

As commercial performance and visitor attendance are inextricably linked, thus presenting challenges when visitor numbers are in decline, the Museum would benefit from an independent assessment of its commercial operations to analyse performance and where future emphasis should be focused. The remit would also look at how investment in digital technologies will improve the performance of each of the commercial businesses. The Board agreed that the Executive should make every haste to engage a consultant (preferably on a *pro bono* basis) to undertake the review and looked forward to reviewing the results at the February Board meeting, together with the FY2018/19 budget and three-year rolling programme (aligning with both the Science Strategy and Strategy to 2020).

1936 HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT: JULY-SEPTEMBER 2017 (Q2) (TP 17/57)

The Board noted the report

Items for Approval:**1937 LOAN APPROVALS: ANCIENT OCEANS AND LIFE THROUGH FOSSILS TOURING EXHIBITIONS – IN PRINCIPLE OBJECT LIST (TP 17/58)**

Ancient Oceans and *Life Through Fossils* are the next two exhibitions in the series of new specimen- and science-rich international touring exhibitions. The exhibition titles were working titles and may well be changed to exploit marketing opportunities or links to documentaries.

Professor Ian Owens, Director of Science, explained that out of a total of 247 specimens that had been assessed for potential inclusion in these exhibitions, 216 objects were deemed suitable for touring. The outstanding 24 objects had not been approved at the present time, either because they are unsuitable for touring or because additional information is required. The Board approved this recommended list of items, subject to a number of conditions being met, and noted that the outstanding list of 24 objects will be submitted to the Board in May once additional data had been collected.

1938 REVIEW OF NHM SCIENCE AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSE (TP 17/59)

At the Annual Strategy Day in September the Board reviewed the report from the Visiting Group for the Review of NHM Scientific Activities, together with the draft management response and action plan. The Board requested that the response be revised to capture the key recommendations of the report and be bolder in stating that the Museum would develop a comprehensive action plan that includes an ambitious long-term vision for the Museum based on cross-cutting initiatives.

Professor Owens outlined the action plan and an update on the key strategic recommendations. The argument for collections storage had been developed and discussions were ongoing with government channels. The case for investment had to be made with haste and Trustees confirmed their commitment to act as advocates to progress this initiative.

The process for developing the next NHM Science Strategy has begun and will involve a combination of cross-museum questionnaires, internal workshops and engagement with external stakeholders. It is anticipated that the new strategy will come to the Science Advisory Committee and Trustees for approval in April and May 2018,

respectively, and will be aligned with both the existing NHM Strategy to 2020 and the parallel discussions on cross-cutting initiatives and the long-term vision for the Museum.

The Board thanked Professor Owens for the update and approved the revised management response.

Items for Noting:

1939 COLLECTIONS STORAGE UPDATE (TP 17/60)

Professor Owens provided an update on the Collections Programme following discussion at the Annual Trustees' Strategy Day and Property Committee meetings. A collection masterplan is under development and the Board noted the three phases and endorsed the next steps of the programme.

1940 GROUNDS TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME UPDATE (TP 17/61)

The Property Committee had endorsed the proposal to undertake a thorough analysis of the different elements of the Grounds Transformation Programme to ensure that the scheme meets the needs of the Museum and is affordable to deliver. It is anticipated that this exercise will be completed by late December and a revised brief and a redesigned scheme will be developed based on the information received, together with a new funding and communications strategy. Professor Owens cautioned the Board that this process could take up to six months if the findings proved to be substantial. Given the timeframe to finalise the revised designs, the Programme Board had agreed not to proceed with an application to the HLF in December.

The Executive fully supported the continuance of the Grounds Transformation Programme and believed it to be an important project that both improved the Museum's visitor experience and laid the foundation for building long-term relationships. The Board endorsed the recommendation of the Property committee to continue the scheme and thanked Mr Robert Noels for his scrutiny and advice, as Chair of the Property Committee.

Committee reports:

1941 REPORT FROM THE AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 9 NOVEMBER 2017

Nothing substantial to report.

1942 REPORT AND MINUTES OF THE PROPERTY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 30 OCTOBER 2017 (TP 17/62)

Nothing substantial to report.

1943 REPORT AND MINUTES OF THE SCIENCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 12 SEPTEMBER 2017 (TP 17/63)

Nothing substantial to report.

1944 REPORT AND MINUTES OF THE DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 14 NOVEMBER 2017

Dame Frances Cairncross (Chair of the NHM Development Advisory Committee) provided an update from the November meeting.

1945 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Forthcoming events: Fiona McWilliams, Director of Development and Communications, will circulate the annual schedule of events, but drew the Board's attention to two major events:

- 9 February: The launch of Dippy on Tour in Dorchester
- 16 May: Annual Trustees' Dinner

1946 AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE BOARD MEETINGS (TP 17/64)

The rolling agenda for future meetings was noted.

1947 EVENTS DIARY (TP 17/65)

The Board of Trustees noted the contents of the report.

1948 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

2018:

- 13 February
- 24 May (Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery)
- 3 July (Annual Staff Summer party in the evening)
- 18 September (Annual Trustees' Strategy Day – all day)
- 20 November

2019:

- 19 February
- 21 May
- 2 July (Annual Staff Summer party in the evening)
- 24 September (Annual Trustees' Strategy Day)
- 19 November

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Allen'.