

No 255

THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

AT A MEETING ON

THURSDAY 24 MAY 2018

AT 11.00 A.M.

BIRMINGHAM MUSEUM & ART GALLERY

Present

TRUSTEES

Lord Green of Hurstpierpoint (in the Chair)
Dame Frances Cairncross DBE FRSE
Professor Christopher Gilligan CBE
Professor Sir John Holman
Anand Mahindra (joined the meeting by phone)
Hilary Newiss
Robert Noel
Simon Patterson
Professor Sir Robert Stephen John Sparks CBE FRS
Dr Kim L Winser OBE

In Attendance

Sir Michael Dixon (Director)
Neil Greenwood (Director of Finance and Corporate Services)
Clare Matterson CBE (Director of Engagement)
Fiona McWilliams (Director of Development and Communications)
Professor Ian Owens (Director of Science)
Frances Allen (Board Secretary)

Preliminary

1967 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Professor Sir John Beddington CMG FRS and Professor Dame Janet Thornton DBE FMedSci FRS

1968 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REGISTER OF INTERESTS (TP 18/15)

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

1969 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 13 FEBRUARY 2018

The Minutes of the meeting of the Trustees held on 13 February 2018 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

1970 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MEETING OF 13 FEBRUARY 2018 (TP 18/16)

Museums' Review: The Museums' Review had recommended that national museums develop a new 'partnership framework' to extend their reach throughout England in a more strategic way. The NHM's strategic plan will recognise this (and all other) recommendations of the Museums' Review to ensure alignment of ideology.

The Board also noted that, upon a recommendation from the Cabinet Office, learning and development plans will be incorporated into Trustee appraisals.

Corporate items:

1971 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chair welcomed Clare Matterson, Director of Engagement, to her first official meeting of the Board.

Greg Edgecombe: The Board congratulated Museum palaeontologist, Greg Edgecombe, on his election as Fellow of the Royal Society. Greg Edgecombe is honoured for his research integrating the morphology of Cambrian fossils with evidence from living animals that has resolved the long contested relationships of insects in evolutionary trees.

Environmental Economic Commission: The Chair had accepted an invitation to join the Environmental Economic Commission and this will be reflected on the Trustee Declaration of Interests.

Outreach beyond London: The Board was delighted to hold its first meeting away from London at the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery to coincide with the launch of Dippy's residency in the Museum's Gas Hall. The Chair reflected that this was an important stage in the evolution of the Natural History Museum (NHM) and delivers on its mission to support the regions. This first meeting will set the trend of holding an annual meeting of the Board outside London.

1972 DIRECTOR'S REPORT (TP 18/17)

Water ingress to NHM archive store, 9-10 April 2018: The Director reported on the water ingress to the Archive Store caused by a hot water pipe leak and reassured the Board that measures have been taken to limit the possibility of incidents of this nature reoccurring. In this context, a collection management taskforce has been established to review the vulnerability of collection storage locations, assess risks and to ensure that adequate procedures are in place to respond to future incidents. The National Archives will be visiting the Museum in June to review the damage and procedures.

Although processes are in place to safeguard the collection in the short-term, it should be recognised that infrastructure failures of this kind are happening more frequently and pose a long-term threat to the collection. It is crucial, therefore, that this risk is highlighted in the Museum's request to government for collection storage funding.

Museum attendance: Visitor attendance has increased since the rather disappointing start to the year with strong performance in February to date. This recovery may be due to the general marketing campaign, targeted at the Museum's traditional family audience, which was deployed to drive visits through March and April and into the summer months. Visitor attendance will continue to be closely monitored possibly using analytics to highlight any meaningful patterns in business data.

Major corporate risks: The Board noted that investment in infrastructure and the public offer have been added as new major risks for FY2018/19.

Performance indicators: In wishing to provide more concise and comprehensive information to the Board, the Executive is working on creating a simple monthly report to be circulated between Board meetings. The first draft of this pack will be produced for discussion at the July Board meeting. The Board welcomed this initiative and asked that a summary of the key issues be incorporated into the template so as to provide a clear focus.

1973 FINANCIAL REVIEW FOR THE PERIOD APRIL 2017 – MARCH 2018 (TP 18/18)

Neil Greenwood (Director of Finance and Corporate Services) presented the provisional outturn for the financial year 2017/18. Notwithstanding the challenge to manage expenditure and make savings in order to maintain a healthy Operating Surplus and General Reserve, Mr Greenwood was pleased to report that the outturn was better than previously forecasted. This had been largely achieved by making significant savings and enjoying good performance on visitor-related income during the period January-March 2018.

Inevitably the reduction in expenditure has hampered advancement in some areas of activity (particularly in the Science and digital arena), but the drive to increase income will hopefully yield revenue to allow the Museum to make judicious investment in areas of business that advance the Museum's operation and reputation.

1974 FINANCIAL REVIEW FOR THE PERIOD APRIL 2018 (TP 18/18a)

The Board noted the report.

1975 DEVELOPMENT INCOME SECURED IN FY2017/18 (TP 18/19)

Fiona McWilliams presented the Board with an overview of Development income performance for FY2017/18 and plans to FY2023/24. The summary showed income secured in FY2017/18 that will be received in future years (referred to as pledged income). Ms McWilliams emphasised that a pledge is funding confirmed by a contractual commitment. The good performance in FY2017/18 was largely driven by leveraging the profile and urgency of the Hintze Hall relaunch and, with no such event scheduled this year, Ms McWilliams warned that income from major gifts will be prone to fluctuation.

Items for Approval:**1976 PROGRESS ON STRATEGIC PLANNING (TP 18/20)**

The Director provided an update on the preparation for the new NHM strategic plan, which will supersede the current *Strategy to 2020* document. Since the initial discussion with the Board in February, an internal facilitated workshop had taken place with the remit to develop a vision and define the mission of the NHM. The emerging vision was of a future where people and our planet are each thriving, largely through mankind making better choices about how we interact with the natural world. The Museum's mission should define the unique and special contribution that it can make in delivering that vision.

The Board felt that the vision and mission were not distinctive or unique to the NHM and more emphasis should be placed on the collection. The Director believed that the vision does not have to be unique to the NHM and, arguably, it becomes stronger if shared. The special place of the NHM is in the unique combination of the three components of the mission, especially if greater emphasis is given to the collection.

There was also concern about the extent to which the NHM might be perceived as a campaigning organisation under the stated mission. Whilst some Trustees felt the Museum should have more of a public voice on certain issues, others felt that the Museum's role is to provide evidenced-based data on which people can make informed choices.

The Board will discuss the plan in more detail at the Trustees' Strategy Day in September. At that time it is anticipated that the new Strategy for Science (to be incorporated into the Museum Strategy) will be ready for Trustees' approval. In the interim, the Director will work with a wider group of Museum staff to hone the wording to reflect feedback from the Board.

1977 GROUNDS TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME (Lunch presentation)

The Board welcomed Keith Jennings (Head of Masterplanning and Projects) to the meeting who, along with Professor Ian Owens, presented a revised conceptual design for the Grounds Transformation Programme. Professor Owens explained that, as the spirit of the scheme was to link South Kensington with the wider national programme, the programme had been renamed "*The NHM Gardens: Inspiring Action on UK Biodiversity*".

Fiona McWilliams reported on the fundraising activity for the programme and reflected that it is a gateway project that would lead to the transformation of the galleries and act as a springboard to build bigger donor networks.

The Board welcomed the update and the Chair summarised the actions as follows:

- The Board continues to support the project and recognises its strategic importance.
- The Board is content with the project's direction of travel, the current costs incurred in its development and the outlined plan for preparing an HLF bid in the autumn;
- The Chair reflected that, before the submission of the bid to the HLF, the Board would wish to review the project in more detail at the Board meeting in July.

1978 TOWARDS AN EXHIBITION STRATEGY (TP 18/21)

Clare Matterson (Director of Engagement) shared her initial thoughts on working towards developing an exhibition strategy, where the focus will be on the full range of exhibition offers (including special and touring exhibitions). This holistic approach will ensure clarity of purpose and ambition for exhibitions in the context of visitor numbers, income from sponsorship and commercial, visitor experience and the mission of the Museum. The national programme continues to be an important strand of NHM business and so further opportunities to enhance the programme through initiatives like Real World Science and the UK touring of turnkey exhibitions will be explored.

An imperative of the exhibition strategy will be to look at improved investment in permanent galleries and connection with the collections storage plans in an effort to restore storage space to the public realm. This responds to comments from recent audience surveys suggesting that some visitors regarded the Museum as unchanging with many exhibitions out-of-date. The audience segment that has suffered the sharpest decline is the Museum's traditional family and UK audiences so another strand of the strategy will be to restore these audiences via targeted marketing campaigns and exhibitions.

On a positive note, following the decline in visitor numbers over recent years, attendance is steadily increasing with good performance reported in the last quarter of FY2017/18. Comparative analysis across London-based venues in the sector shows a mixed picture of visitor trends and suggests that the NHM was not the only organisation to experience a decline in attendance. There appears to be no single factor for the decline in this sector but could be, in part, due to the "London factor" (threat of terrorism, cost, competition and travel disruption etc).

The first step in taking forward the strategy will commence with the creation of a visitor charter and the development of a 10-year Audience and Public Space Development plan.

1979 COMMERCIAL REVIEW UPDATE (TP 18/22)

Clare Matterson provided an update on the external review of the Museum's commercial activities. As visitor attendance and commercial income are intrinsically linked (54% of commercial income is linked to visitor numbers at South Kensington), a number of tactical recommendations to increase visitor numbers were actioned, which has led to increased income. The recommendations have also led to the development of a new retail plan for completion by July 2018.

Annual reports for noting:

1980 HEAD OF RISK & ASSURANCE – ANNUAL ASSURANCE TO THE ACCOUNTING OFFICER AND THE AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE 2017/18 (TP 18/23)

The Board of Trustees noted the report.

1981 ANNUAL REVIEW OF GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY (TP 18/24)

The Board of Trustees noted the report.

1982 HEALTH AND SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT 2017/18 (TP 18/25)

The Board of Trustees noted the report.

1983 ANNUAL SECURITY REPORT 2017/18 (TP 18/26)

The Board of Trustees noted the report.

Committee reports:

1984 REPORT FROM THE AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 3 MAY 2018 (TP 18/27)

Hilary Newiss (Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee) provided an update from the May meeting.

1985 REPORT AND MINUTES OF THE DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 1 MAY 2018 (TP 18/28)

Dame Frances Cairncross (Chair of the Development Advisory Committee) reported on the May meeting, which had focused on Development income and fund raising activity for priority projects in the portfolio.

1986 REPORT AND MINUTES OF THE SCIENCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 11 APRIL 2018 (TP 18/29)

Professor Stephen Sparks (Chair of the Science Advisory Committee) reported that the April meeting, which had largely concentrated on the development of the Science Strategy.

1987 REPORT OF THE COMMERCIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 19 APRIL 2018

The focus of the meeting was to discuss the external review of the Museum's commercial activities (as reported in minute 1979 above).

1988 REPORT AND MINUTES OF THE PROPERTY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 23 APRIL 2018 (TP 18/30)

Robert Noel (Chair of the Property Committee) reported that much of the discussion at the April meeting had centred on collections storage (looking at the required volume) and the Masterplan for the South Kensington estate.

1989 TECHNOLOGY REPORT (TP 18/31)

The Board of Trustees noted the report, which sought to highlight and track key aspects of the implementation of the Museum's digital strategy. The Board welcomed the report, but asked that future reports include a simple graphic that would indicate progress. In the context of Board reports, Trustees asked that future cover sheets also included a short "executive summary".

1990 AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE BOARD MEETINGS (TP 18/32)

The rolling agenda for future meetings was noted.

1991 EVENTS DIARY (TP 18/33)

The Board of Trustees noted the contents of the report.

1992 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

1993 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

2018:

- 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 'Steven', is located in the lower-left quadrant of the page.