

No 261

**THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM**

**AT A MEETING ON**

**TUESDAY 19 NOVEMBER 2019**

**AT 09.00 A.M.**

**THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM**

**Present**

**TRUSTEES**

Lord Green of Hurstpierpoint (in the Chair)

Professor Sir John Beddington CMG FRS

Dame Frances Cairncross DBE FRSE

Anand Mahindra

Hilary Newiss

Robert Noel

Simon Patterson

Professor Dame Janet Thornton DBE FMedSci FRS

Dr Kim L Winser OBE

**In Attendance**

Sir Michael Dixon (Director)

Neil Greenwood (Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Services)

Dr Tim Littlewood (Executive Director of Science)

Clare Matterson CBE (Executive Director of Engagement)

Frances Allen (Board Secretary)

Kathryn Packer (Senior Programme Manager, Collections Programme) for item 12

Piers Jones (Chief Digital and Product Officer - joined the meeting by phone) for item 15

Sedef Gavaz (Lead Product Manager) for item 15

**Preliminary**

**2106 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Professor Sir Robert Stephen John Sparks CMG CBE FRS and Fiona McWilliams (Executive Director of Development and Communications)

**2107 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REGISTER OF INTERESTS (TP 19/53)**

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

**2108 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 2 JULY 2019 AND THE ANNUAL TRUSTEES' STRATEGY DAY HELD ON 24 SEPTEMBER 2019**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Trustees held on 2 July 2019 and the Annual Trustees' Strategy Day held on 24 September 2019 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

**2109 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 2 JULY 2019 (TP 19/39)**

The Board noted the actions.

**Corporate items:**

**2110 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

The campaign period for the upcoming General Election officially started on 6 November 2019. As a non-departmental public body, The Chair reminded the Board and Executive Board Museum staff and Trustees are subject to restrictions on activity in this pre-election period in the same way as departmental civil servants.

**2111 DIRECTOR'S REPORT (TP 19/55)**

Counter fraud preparedness and training: The Cabinet Office has asked public sector bodies to focus attention on measures to combat fraud. In response, the Museum's Head of Audit and Risk has led a submission to government on the Museum's counter-fraud measures and devised a mandatory e-learning package for staff.

Appointments to the Board: Recommendations have been submitted to Ministers for approval, but due to strict observance of the rules for purdah, the Board was advised that it is unlikely that a decision will be announced until after the General Election.

Dippy on Tour: The tour had recently opened at the National Museum of Wales in Cardiff. The tour has been a great success with total attendance during the tour exceeding circa 1.5m in total attendance.

Staff survey 2019: The recent staff survey had attracted a good response rate and a presentation will be given to the Board in February when after an in-depth study of the data had been completed.

Emerging risks and changes to the external and internal environment: A brief discussion had taken place at the recent Audit and Risk Committee meeting on issues that may become important over the next few months in response to a changing external landscape and the introduction of a new Museum Strategy. There is a clear difference in attitudes of our visitors among younger generations and currently the Board does not reflect this generational change, so the Museum needs to seek ways to ensure its decision-making is well informed by these stakeholders who will form an increasingly large proportion of our audience.

**2112 FINANCIAL REVIEW FOR THE PERIOD APRIL 2019 – SEPTEMBER 2019 (TP 19/56)**

Neil Greenwood (Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Services) presented the provisional outturn for the period April 2019 to September 2019, which reflected continuing strong performance driven by visitor-related income.

**Items for Approval:**

**2113 DRAFT BUSINESS PLAN 2020/21 TO 2022/23 (TP 19/57)**

The Director presented the structure of the first three-year Business Plan to implement the new Museum strategy (*Vision and Strategy to 2031*), which was approved by the Board in July 2019. The draft Business Plan is an internal document setting out a one-year operating plan and is intended to provide managers with the tools to construct departmental delivery plans and forward job plans for staff. An externally facing version of the business plan will be required for some types of use, for example to support funding applications to donor organisations, and this will be submitted to Trustees in due course. The budget for the Business Plan was discussed in more detail under item 2114.

Anand Mahindra congratulated the Executive Board on developing the new strategy, which offers the opportunity to promote the NHM as a global institution. The unveiling of the strategy will also act as the springboard to persuade the public that the NHM is not only a wonderful building known for its dinosaur collection but is an institution that seeks to create advocates for the planet.

EB looked forward to receiving further feedback from the Board and acknowledged the suggestion that the Business Plan undergoes a thorough proofread to ensure that it is clear and that all comments are appropriate.

**2114 BUDGET FY2020/21 AND FORECAST FOR 2021/22 AND 2022/23 (TP 19/58)**

Neil Greenwood presented the budget for 2020/21 and projections for the following two years though to 2022/23. The budget had been prepared in line with the development of the new strategy and underpins the three-year business plan (as detailed in item 2113). The new strategy had prompted several bids for investment in capital, strategic projects and increases in operational expenditure to enable delivery of the objectives outlined in the strategic plan. These bids were prioritised at the Executive Board Planning Conference in October and are reflected in the budget along with the business plans for income generating activities.

Trustees reviewed the budget and noted that in FY2021/22 the General Fund Reserve (which operates as a first-call contingency and underpins the budget going forward) falls below the previously agreed minimum level of £4m. Mr Greenwood explained that this is due to several factors, including the permanent loss of the ice rink from FY2021/22, as the Urban Nature Project progresses on site, and a period when the front entrance is closed for terracotta repairs, which may impact on visitor footfall and venue hire. Mr Greenwood stressed, however, that the Reserve position for FY2021/22 can be addressed during FY2020/21 as part of next year's budgeting.

The Board approved the budget for FY2020/21, but felt unable to endorse the budget for FY2021/22 due to the insufficient (-£4m) GFR provision. The Executive was asked to come back to the Board in February to propose how this shortfall will be addressed.

**2115 ETHICAL POLICY APPROVAL (INCLUDING GIFT ACCEPTANCE APPENDIX) (TP 19/59)**

The Board was asked to approve the revised ethical principles policy, that had been amended to reflect the Board's comments made at the Annual Trustees' Strategy Day in September, together with the appended gift acceptance form, which outlines the NHM's gift acceptance policy and the processes of due diligence undertaken before gifts can be accepted. Trustees were reminded that the Museum's Ethical Policy was last formally reviewed in 2012 and since that time the external environment has changed significantly. In recent years there has been a shift in society's view that museums should play a wider role as shapers on, and contributors to, societal change and this had prompted a revision of the existing policy.

The Board approved both documents and recommended that these be evaluated on an annual basis to test resilience and formally reviewed every three years and amended as appropriate.

**2116 MODERN SLAVERY POLICY (TP 19/60)**

The Modern Slavery Act 2015 requires all organisations over a certain size to develop an annual slavery and human trafficking statement outlining the steps that the organisation has taken to reduce the risk of modern slavery taking place in their business or supply chains. The Board approved the Museum's third statement, prepared by the Museum's Procurement Manager, which summarised the steps taken in 2018/19 to reduce the risk of human rights abuse in the Museum's supply chains, together with future plans.

**2117 CHARITY PARTNERSHIPS POLICY (TP 19/61)**

The purpose of this policy is to clarify the Museum's position on working with other charities, and what activity is and is not appropriate. It covers charity partnerships, staff fundraising, venue hire and other on-site promotion, national charity days, requests for auction items, charity advertising and gifts of equipment.

The Board approved the policy

**Regular Updates:**

**2118 COLLECTIONS PROGRAMME : SCIENCE AND DIGITISATION CENTRE – BUDGET BID (TP 19/62)**

Kathryn Packer (Senior Programme Manager, Collections Programme) provided an update on the Museum's bid for funding to create a new NHM science and digitisation centre based at Harwell Science and Innovation Campus. The experience of working with Harwell had been very positive so the NHM will be forging ahead with developing a bid, based on the current proposal, in readiness for any funding opportunity that could emerge under a new government. Due to the uncertainty, a contingency plan will also be developed if a funding

opportunity does not arise. In parallel, the Collections Programme team will continue to develop costings associated with the move and determine what collections will be moved from South Kensington to an additional site. The Board reviewed the recommendations outlined in the update and agreed that deeper engagement with the Greater London Assembly should be pursued.

#### **2119 PUBLIC PROGRAMME UPDATE (TP 19/63)**

Clare Matterson (Executive Director of Engagement) presented an update of the public programme and the Board noted that for the second time in the Museum's history over 500k people visited the NHM during October 2019. In October the Museum had launched *Orbit* (a looped 90-minute film based on NASA photographs taken from the International Space Station looking down on Earth) and *Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2019*. The *Lates* evening in November will be in collaboration with the BBC, showcasing their new documentary series *Seven Worlds, One Planet*.

#### **2120 UPDATE ON SCIENCE PLAN (2020/2023) (TP 19/64)**

Dr Tim Littlewood (Executive Director of Science) provided an update on science progress and future objectives. Currently in development is the Science Plan, which underpins the forthcoming NHM Strategy and focuses on delivering excellent science by maintaining business as usual and through major focal areas and goals outlined in the update report. It is anticipated that the final draft of the Science Plan will be reviewed by the Science Advisory Committee and thereafter presented to the Board of Trustees at a future date. However, it was acknowledged that the timetable may slip if it becomes apparent that the Science Advisory Committee require more time for deliberation.

#### **2121 DIGITAL UPDATE**

The Board welcomed Piers Jones' (Chief Digital and Product Officer) and Sedef Gavaz (Lead Product Manager) to the meeting (Piers Jones joined the discussion by phone).

At the Board meeting in February 2017 Piers Jones had presented his vision for a new digital strategy to respond to a more digitally astute public whose behaviours were rapidly evolving as new technologies and devices became more widely adopted. The strategic objective (then and now) was to engage and involve the widest possible audience by experimenting with different format material to make the NHM brand more visible and relevant to a virtual and physical audience and to also increase income through optimising online sales. To realise this vision Piers Jones had restructured Digital Media and Marketing (now Digital Media) and established four product teams covering the full spectrum of digital activity:

- Connect: connecting people to the natural world through our science content
- Participate: encouraging participation and investigation in the natural world
- Visit: inspiring and helping visitors before, during and after a visit
- Commercial: increasing income through optimising online sales

This new approach was similar to the methodology adopted at the tech giants, such as Amazon and Google, and represented a cultural shift in the traditional way of working at the NHM. This structure had proven to be successful in putting the Museum on a trajectory of digital growth, particularly the NHM's social media presence and website traffic. Most encouragingly, compared with the digital activity in peer institutions, web visits to the NHM website and social media platforms were encouragingly high.

A major success factor in building a new online audience, and connecting people to NHM science, has been the introduction of a digital magazine, "Discover", which features articles on NHM science and scientific fieldwork. The articles provide content for an audience with an appetite for unbiased, evidence-based scientific data. This platform has been the main driver of the Museum's digital growth online and is also the highest driver of its international traffic, as well as increasing engagement with the adult millennial audience base. Recent data highlighted that 5.5m visits to the website were international, with some articles showing exceptional engagement for example, the *Flying Ant Day* article on "Discover" was viewed 45k times.

Digital Media is working to develop innovative tools to improve physical visits and also encourage people to investigate the natural world via mobile technology apps. One such tool is the *Dino Trail*, an alternative way-finding mechanism linked to physical visits that finds dinosaur-related content throughout the Museum. This has been particularly successful with the Millennial audience who are happy to use their smartphones within the museum. In addition, the instructional "*How To...*" series (integrating content and video) helps to inspire a new generation to participate in nature and has been a great success.

Growing commercial conversion continues to be a priority and improvements in online technology has increased tickets sales for *Wildlife Photographer of the Year* and WPY website page views. Digital Media has also improved the online donation function by moving from a third-party platform to reduce the number of "clicks" to donate and ensuring NHM receives the full donation value.

The Board thanked Sedef Gavaz and Piers Jones for the presentation and was very pleased with the overall achievements made in the last two years under Piers Jones' leadership. The Board congratulated the team, for making huge strides in building stronger digital output, which has put the NHM on a stronger footing in this territory.

**2122 HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT: JULY-SEPTEMBER 2019 (QUARTER 2) (TP 19/65)**

The board acknowledged and noted the report.

**Committee reports:**

**2123 REPORT ON THE COMMERCIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 5 NOVEMBER 2019 (TP 19/66)**

Dr Kim Winser (Chair of the Commercial Advisory Committee) reported on the meeting held in November and the Board was interested to note that visitor numbers in October 2019 were above 500k for the second time ever. It was also noted that WPY has had its biggest ever onsite ticket sales in its current location due to a revision of entry criteria.

**2124 REPORT OF THE DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 29 OCTOBER 2019**

Dame Frances Cairncross (Chair of the Development Advisory Committee) reported on the October meeting, which had reviewed the Development Planning Portfolio of projects to assess fundraising viability. Dr Winser also reported on a potential collaborative project with a leading beauty brand.

**2125 REPORT FROM THE AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 31 OCTOBER 2019 (TP 19/67)**

Hilary Newiss (Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee) reported on the October meeting, which had reviewed the risk register.

**2126 REPORT FROM THE SCIENCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 9 SEPTEMBER 2019 (TP 19/68)**

The future of the Science Advisory Committee had been discussed at the meeting and it was agreed that the Committee will meet three times per year. The final schedule will be agreed by the Committee's Chair (Professor Sir Stephen Sparks) and the Director of Science (Dr Tim Littlewood).

**2127 REPORT FROM THE PROPERTY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 21 OCTOBER 2019 (TP 19/69)**

Mr Robert Noel (Chair of the Property Committee) informed the Board that the October meeting had focussed on the Collections Programme and the importance of protecting the collections if funding was not forthcoming.

**2128 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

DeWorm3: Dr Tim Littlewood provided an update on the project and agreed to pursue the suggestion that an audit of the Museum's involvement and contribution be undertaken at the end of the project. A further update will be included in the Science report to the Board in February 2020.

**2129 AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE BOARD MEETINGS (TP 19/70)**

The rolling agenda for future meetings was noted.

**2130 EVENTS DIARY (TP 19/71)**

The Board of Trustees noted the contents of the report.

**2131 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS**

**2020:**

- 18 February 2020
- 19 May 2020
- June (actual date to be confirmed): ANNUAL TRUSTEES' DINNER
- 7 July 2020 (Annual Staff Summer party in the evening)
- 15 September (Annual Trustees' Strategy Day)
- 17 November

**2021:**

- 16 February
- 18 May
- June : Annual Trustees' Dinner
- 6 July (Annual Staff Summer party in the evening)
- 22 September (Annual Trustees' Strategy Day)
- 23 November

