

No 262

THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

AT A MEETING ON

TUESDAY 18 FEBRUARY 2020

AT 09.00 A.M.

THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

Present

TRUSTEES

Lord Green of Hurstpierpoint (in the Chair)

Dame Frances Cairncross DBE FRSE (joined by phone)

Hilary Newiss

Robert Noel

Professor Dame Janet Thornton DBE FMedSci FRS (joined by phone)

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)

Fiona McWilliams (Executive Director of Development)

Clare Matterson CBE (Executive Director of Engagement and Communications)

Frances Allen (Board Secretary)

CLOSED SESSION

The meeting commenced with a closed session of the Board, which was not minuted.

Preliminary

2132 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Professor Sir John Beddington CMG FRS, Anand Mahindra, Simon Patterson and Professor Sir Robert Stephen John Sparks CMG CBE FRS

2133 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REGISTER OF INTERESTS (TP 20/01)

No changes to the Register of Interests were made.

2134 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19 NOVEMBER 2019

The Minutes of the meeting of the Trustees held on 19 November 2019 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

2135 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 19 NOVEMBER 2019 (TP 20/02)

All matters arising were covered on the agenda.

Corporate items:

2136 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Nothing to report.

2137 DIRECTOR'S REPORT (TP 20/03)

Launch and roll-out of Vision and Strategy to 2031: The external launch of the Museum's new Strategy took place on Monday 20 January and the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. The communications programme included a roll-out to key external stakeholders and the media (including social media), which included a live interview with the Director and pre-recorded interviews with NHM staff on Radio 4's *Today Programme*.

In observing the ethos of the new Strategy, the Museum was developing a commitment and action plan covering several sustainable areas, including travel. The Executive was reminded that any activity in the realm of sustainability should also consider social impact as well as environmental. A briefing document will be circulated to Trustees once this work has been completed.

Risk review process: The Senior Management Team had reviewed the NHM risk universe, rescoring and adding emerging risks in response to changed internal and external factors, which were reviewed by the Audit and Risk Committee at its meeting on 4 February 2020. The Board noted that since this process the Executive is considering further emerging risks – for example the coronavirus infection, which has emerged in China and which shows sign of spreading internationally.

A review of the FY2019/20 risks, as well as a template for FY2020/21 list of risks, will be presented to the Board at the May 2020 meeting. The risks (eight in total) will be reviewed by the Audit and Risk Committee throughout the year (two risks will be reviewed at each meeting).

Government relations: Since the General Election in December, the Museum had been occupied with re-engaging with government and, now that the government has announced the reshuffle, work is taking place on remapping government connections and inviting Ministers to visit the Museum to familiarise themselves with our work. The Board would welcome the opportunity to view the specific action and communication plan.

World Economic Forum meeting, Davos: The Museum sent a team to Davos at the invitation of the organisers to have a presence at the annual WEF meeting. Images from *Wildlife Photographer of the Year* were projected in the conference centre and three NHM senior scientists staffed a stand and discussed with delegates the Museum's work. The Director gave thanks to Trustees – Anand Mahindra and Simon Patterson – for visiting the stand and showing their support for the team.

Year of Biodiversity: The Museum has made biodiversity the focus for the public programme this year and key events, such as the Annual Trustees' Dinner, will link to this. In addition, the Museum will engage with government to explore how it can participate in COP26 and biodiversity COP15 (in Kunming, China in September) to help make them a success.

Museum attendance: Museum attendance to the end of January hit record levels. However, it is uncertain at this time the extent to which external influences (such as the Coronavirus etc) will have on future attendance, particularly from overseas visitors. The Board reflected that, as the Museum is reliant on visitor attendance and visitor-related income, it should consider investing in other areas that could attract income (e.g. licencing, digitisation etc) to mitigate any fall in physical attendance.

Dippy on Tour: The Director recently attended the launch of Dippy on Tour in Rochdale, which was a great success. Dippy will return to London after his tour for some conservation work before going on temporary display at South Kensington, as part of the *Dino Take-Over Year*. A proposal to tour Dippy internationally will be presented to the Board for approval in due course.

Acquisition: The Museum has recently purchased two manuscript notebooks belonging to George Murray Levick. Levick, a scientist on Scott's Antarctic expedition, spent the Antarctic summer of 1911-12 observing a colony of Adélie Penguins at Cape Adare.

Piers Jones: The Director reported the sad news that the Museum's Chief Digital and Product Officer, Piers Jones, passed away before Christmas. The impact Piers had on the NHM cannot be emphasised enough. He brought structural and cultural change to the way we think about and deliver digital products and wisdom and experience to a much wider range of things that we do. He is sorely missed and impossible to replace, but we are having to consider how to adapt our digital teams now he is no longer with us.

Succession planning: Director: The Director recently announced that he will be bringing forward his retirement date from March 2021 to 30 September 2020, as he will be taking up a new appointment as Principal of Green Templeton College, University of Oxford. The search for Sir Michael's successor is advancing well and it is hoped that an announcement will be made soon.

2138 FINANCIAL REVIEW FOR THE PERIOD APRIL 2019 – DECEMBER 2019 (TP 20/04)

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

At the meeting in November the Board approved the budget for FY2020/21 but felt unable to endorse the budget for FY2021/22 due to the insufficient General Reserve Fund (GRF) provision, which fell below the minimum level of £4m. The Executive was asked to come back to the Board to propose how this shortfall will be addressed. In this context, Mr Greenwood explained that because of the strong financial performance, the GRF for FY2020/21 is above the predicted level. This, along with some other possible reductions, will mitigate part of the significant risk of a below target level GFR for FY2021/22. This provided assurance for the Board and the Executive will keep the Board updated on related mitigation plans.

Items for Approval:

2139 DEED OF COVENANT (TP 20/05)

The Deed of Covenant is the legal agreement between The Trustees of the Natural History Museum and The Natural History Museum Trading Company Limited. It confirms that the Trading Company will donate all its annual profits to the Museum, hence eliminating the potential for a significant Corporation Tax bill on its trading profits. The draft updated deed now reflects current tax law and reflects the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales' (ICAEW) technical release on donations from trading companies. The Audit & Risk Committee reviewed the deed when it met on 4 February 2020 and recommended that it be approved by the Board of Trustees. With this reassurance, the Board of Trustees approved the Deed of Covenant for signing.

Items for Discussion:

2140 EXTERNAL REVIEW OF THE BOARD (TP 20/06)

The triennial external review of the Board took place in 2019 and was set against the Cabinet Office governance self-assessment framework, including an assessment of the conduct and modus operandi of the Board committees. The draft report was reviewed by the Board along with the key points and recommendations.

The general view of the Board was that the report was rather long and formulaic, but there was also a great deal of valuable information in the body of the report that indicated areas of dissatisfaction that could be explored more deeply. A key recommendation is that a review of the role and structure of Board committees should be undertaken to ensure that the purpose and interaction between the committees are clear and are not duplicated. To aid this task, the committees' terms and reference and membership will be revisited and refreshed as necessary. The Chair reflected that an advisory committee representing Engagement did not exist and perhaps the creation of such a committee should be considered.

Another issue raised by many of the respondents who took part in the review was the need to improve the diversity of the Board as the current composition did not reflect the contemporary profile of the Museum's audience, which was young and diverse. Collectively the Board and Executive will consider ways in which to cultivate and persuade diverse talent to join the Board.

In conclusion, the key issues will be explored over the next six months by the Director and Chief of Staff (Directorate) so that a new Director can operate in the knowledge that the Board Review has been undertaken and that the Board and Executive have a shared view of how good governance of the NHM is delivered. In the short term, the Executive will produce a "management response" to the report and present this to the Board in May.

2141 ANNUAL EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT SURVEY 2019 (TP 20/07)

The Director presented the summary results of the employer engagement survey conducted in September-November 2019, which received an outstanding 87% response rate. This good score was perhaps influenced by the new bottom-up approach that had been adopted following the 2018 survey. This took the form of the survey consultants (The Survey Initiative) facilitating staff workshops on topics that had attracted the lower scores, namely (1) Leadership, (2) Consultation and Collaboration and (3) Respect and Safety.

This led to the formation of a Survey Working Group populated with staff volunteers who worked on finding solutions to issues in some of the problem areas and their findings/action plans were adopted by Executive Board and presented to staff by the Survey Working Group itself. Further workshops were held covering pay and promotions, bullying and harassment and interdepartmental working and the Executive will take forward the actions arising from these workshops.

Generally, the 2019 survey showed improvements, but some areas were marginally worse - particularly bullying and harassment despite workshops and various Museum initiatives introduced to tackle this problem. For example, the Museum held extensive active bystander training, the aim of which was to empower staff to challenge poor behaviours and it has recently introduced the Mental First Aiders scheme. Naturally, the Executive is deeply concerned that bullying and harassment is still regarded as an issue and external guidance/expertise may be sought in trying to tackle this problem, in addition to holding workshops to understand the extent and underlying issues. The Executive will ensure that the Board's suggestion regarding email etiquette is embedded into the whole training programme.

The Board congratulated the Executive on the dramatic improvement, particularly the significant shift in the Leadership score, but the imperative now is to address the issue of bullying and harassment. The new Director of HR will be instrumental in pursuing a solution.

2142 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (TP 20/08)

As part of the process of developing the new Museum Strategy, the Museum has been working on developing a success framework and set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), which demonstrate progress against the five strategic priorities. Data collection against the new measures will begin in Quarter 1 2020/21 and the first set will be reported at the November 2020 Board meeting (as the reports will not be ready for the July 2020 meeting). The Board reviewed the list and particularly liked the visual representation (spider diagrams), which showed data at a glance and told the story in a coherent way. The Board provided some recommendations, which were noted by the Executive.

2143 PUBLIC PROGRAMME UPDATE (TP 20/09)

Clare Matterson (Executive Director of Engagement and Communications) presented an update of the public programme and the Board noted progress on the Urban Nature Project and the change to the original specification to include a venue hire space/café in the eastern garden area. This will be included in the business plan and planning application to be submitted to the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea in May. The project will be launched as a national programme shortly thereafter.

In January the Museum launched the new Strategy, which was a huge cross-Museum effort. The declaration of a planetary emergency and the new vision and mission helped shape the national news agenda on the day of the launch. In January, the Museum unveiled the *Fantastic Beasts: The Wonder of Nature* exhibition, which opens on 22 May 2020 and runs until January 2021.

2144 COLLECTIONS PROGRAMME AND SCIENCE UPDATE (TP 20/10)

Dr Tim Littlewood (Executive Director of Science) provided an update on the Collections Programme and confirmed that the budget bid for funding the NHM Science and Digitisation Centre at Harwell had been submitted to DCMS. The key piece of work that will now be embarked upon is to engage with colleagues across the Museum to determine what elements of the collection will be moved to the new location and how this momentous move will allow the Museum to be in a better place for subsequent generations.

Dr Littlewood was pleased to announce that the new Head of Life Sciences – Dr Ken Norris – has been appointed and will be joining the Museum on 21 April 2020. Dr Norris is currently Director of Science at the Zoological Society of London.

Another area of importance was the DeWorm3 project. From October 2020 the University of Washington will assume responsibilities for delivering the assessment and surveillance phases of DeWorm3 and the NHM will cease to operate DeWorm3 when all reports and deliverables for the intervention phase are completed (likely April 2021). A systematic transition plan is being developed between NHM and UW to ensure DeWorm3 continues towards its goals seamlessly. As the founding lead of the DeWorm3 project, the NHM will continue to track the progress and success of the project.

2145 NHM MAJOR EVENTS BRIEF (TP 20/11)

Fiona McWilliams (Executive Director of Development) advised the Board of Trustees of two big events occurring in the next few months: the launch of the *Fantastic Beasts: The Wonder of Nature* exhibition on Thursday 21 May and this year's Annual Trustees' Dinner on Tuesday 9 June, the theme of which will be biodiversity to celebrate the Museum's Year of Biodiversity. Both are very different events and equally important in getting a wide range of people and organisations to become familiar with the Museum and its work. As both events are only a few weeks apart, Ms McWilliams urged Trustees to lend their support in attending both events and to also help manage the guest lists.

The merit of changing the date of the Annual Trustees' Dinner was discussed, but it was agreed that the date will remain as 9 June 2020. The Chair highlighted the importance of this event as a vehicle to showcase the work of the Museum to a wide range of stakeholders. In this context, The Chair urged Board members to attend this important annual event.

Regular Updates:

Committee reports:

2146 REPORT OF THE DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 4 FEBRUARY 2020

Fiona McWilliams reported on the February meeting (in the absence of the Chair of the Development Advisory Committee, Dame Frances Cairncross) and circulated the events diary prepared by Katy Payne (Head of Special Events and Supporter Engagement).

2147 REPORT FROM THE AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 4 FEBRUARY 2020

Hilary Newiss (Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee) reported on the February meeting, which included a lengthy discussion on the Museum's collections. It was agreed that, for good governance, an annual report on the state of the collections will form part of the annual assurance to the Board's input into the Annual Report:

2148 REPORT FROM THE PROPERTY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 6 FEBRUARY 2020 (TP 20/13)

Mr Robert Noel (Chair of the Property Committee) informed the Board that the February meeting had included a discussion on the future structure of the Property Committee and ratification of the new terms of reference. Other agenda items focussed on the Museum's major projects.

2149 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

2150 AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE BOARD MEETINGS (TP 20/14)

The rolling agenda for future meetings was noted.

2151 EVENTS DIARY (TP 20/15)

The Board of Trustees noted the contents of the report.

2152 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

2020:

- 19 May 2020 (Rochdale)
- 21 May: Launch of *Fantastic Beasts* exhibition
- 9 June: 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 (date to be determined): Annual Trustees' Dinner
- 6 July (Annual Staff Summer party in the evening)
- 22 September (Annual Trustees' Strategy Day)
- 23 November

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