

No 267

**THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM**

**AT A MEETING ON**

**TUESDAY 16 FEBRUARY 2021**

**AT 09.00 A.M.**

**TEAMS VIRTUAL MEETING**

**Present**

**TRUSTEES**

Lord Green of Hurstpierpoint (Chair)  
Professor Sir John Beddington CMG FRS  
Harris Bokhari OBE  
Dame Frances Cairncross DBE FRSE  
Hilary Newiss  
Professor Yadvinder Malhi FRS CBE  
Robert Noel  
Simon Patterson  
Professor Sir Stephen Sparks CBE FRS  
Dr Sarah E Thomas  
Professor Dame Janet Thornton DBE FRS  
Dr Kim L Winser OBE

**In Attendance**

Dr Douglas Gurr (Director)  
Neil Greenwood (Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Services)  
Dr Tim Littlewood (Executive Director of Science)  
Fiona McWilliams (Executive Director of Development and Communications)  
Clare Matterson CBE (Executive Director of Engagement)  
Bethan Parry (Directorate Chief of Staff)  
Frances Allen (Board Secretary)

Dr Alex Burch (Head of Public Programmes) – for item 2237  
Dr Sarah Long (Head of Registry) – for item 2239  
Lorraine Cornish (Head of Conservation) – for item 2239  
Keith Jennings (Head of Masterplanning and Planning) – for item 2240  
Kathryn Packer (NHM@Harwell Project Director) – for item 2240

**Preliminary**

**2229 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

None

**2230 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REGISTER OF INTERESTS (TP 21/01)**

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

**2231 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17 NOVEMBER 2020**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Trustees held on 17 November 2020 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

**2232 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 17 NOVEMBER 2020 (TP 21/02)**

All matters arising are on the meeting's agenda.

**Corporate items:**

**2233 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

The Chair welcomed Dr Sarah Thomas to her first Board meeting. Dr Thomas is best known for her leadership positions in several research libraries including Cornell, Harvard and the Bodleian Libraries. Dr Thomas has experience of managing large collections (including a move of collections to a large storage facility) and of digital technology applied to library scenarios.

**2234 DIRECTOR'S REPORT (TP 21/03)**

The report provided a summary of recent activity and current topics on the horizon, as well as the Director's first reflections of the organisation since taking office in December 2020.

The Executive has been developing a 1-year Operating Plan and associated metrics to ensure that the NHM delivers priority activities at the pace required to achieve its ambitious *Vision and Strategy to 2031*. The Plan will be finalised in mid-March (once details of the financial settlement from the Chancellor's Budget are known) and will be shared with Trustees for comment and approval. Following finalisation of the Plan, the Director will introduce a quarterly review to track progress and highlight where action needs to be taken. This will be used to update Trustees ahead of each Board meeting with a view to first review at the end of Q1.

**2235 FINANCIAL REVIEW FOR THE PERIOD APRIL – DECEMBER 2020 (TP 21/04)**

The report presented by Neil Greenwood (Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Services) reflected the financial position to December 2020. The forecast takes account of the latest closure of the Museum to the public (from 16 December) and assumes that the Museum will remain closed for the remainder of the financial year. The closure of the Museum has produced a significant loss of self-generated and visitor-related income which, to a large extent, had been mitigated by cost saving measures, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and government mitigation support. The effect of Covid support on the forecast outturn clearly demonstrates the need for continued support.

It was agreed that the policy for setting the General Reserve will be reviewed mid-year to establish whether it is still appropriate and able to withstand unexpected challenges.

**Updates:**

**2236 BUDGET FOR FY2021/22 (TP 21/05)**

The provisional budget had been prepared amidst continuing uncertainty from the impact of Covid-19 and, therefore, had to be based on some key assumptions for visitor numbers and the level of Government support. A final budget and associated Operating Plan will be submitted to the Board at the end of March once the level of Government support is known. The Board welcomed Neil Greenwood's clear paper and found the separation of pre-Covid and post-Covid effect on the operating surplus very illustrative of the need for continued government support.

The Board approved the provisional budget and looked forward to receiving the final budget and Operating Plan for approval at the end of March.

**2237 UNDERSTANDING AND SHARING THE COLLECTIONS: FINAL PRINCIPLES (TP 21/06)**

Dr Alex Burch (Head of Public Programmes) explained that *Understanding and Sharing the Collections* is one of four strands of work being undertaken by the Museum as part of its focus on EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion). As a science-based organisation seeking to address the planetary emergency, it is important to engage with the widest possible audience to stimulate their interest in the natural world. This will be achieved by having a richer array of diverse stories, informed by scholarship and research, that will resonate with broad audiences, enriching their experience and understanding.

Since the presentation to the Board in November 2020, further work has been undertaken to develop the Principles for this strand of EDI work to capture the recommendations made by the Board and Executive. The Principles sit underneath (and complement) the Museum's Ethics Principles.

The Board approved the principles (subject to minor amendments), which they felt were positive and well balanced. The Board noted that the approved Principles will be published more widely, via the internet and blogs, and also shared with DCMS for information.

**2238 REVISED HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY (TP 21/07)**

The Museum had been successful in securing transition to the International Standard for Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems ISO 45001:2018 which is replacing the British Standard. The revised policy presented to the Board emphasises the commitment of all senior governance and management on the treatment of health and safety in the workplace and transition to new health and safety standard.

The Trustees approved the revised Health & Safety policy which will be signed by the Chair and Museum Director.

**2239 TREASURES EXHIBITION – MELBOURNE (TP 21/08)**

Dr Sarah Long's (Head of Registry) paper outlined the risks and issues associated with the installation and opening of *Treasures of the Natural World* exhibition at the Melbourne Museum due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic restricting entry into Australia. The exhibition would normally require a team of 8-9 Museum staff to install the exhibition, due to the value and scientific/cultural importance of the 228 items to go on display, but the current restrictions prevent this.

A compromise solution was proposed that balanced the Museum's reputation, statutory responsibility for the care and management of risk to the collection, the safety of NHM staff travelling internationally with fulfilling the commitment to Museums Victoria. The Board noted that the Museum's own experienced install team are important in mitigating risks to the collections and reputational risk related to loss and damage.

The Board approved the proposal to seek an exemption to enter Australia for a small team (minimum of 2 people) to install the exhibition working with colleagues at Museums Victoria and acknowledged the risks to the collections related to fulfilling the contract with a reduced team or no team. The Board also recognised that sending no team may be an outcome given the current climate.

**2240 NHM@HARWELL (TP 21/09)**

Dr Tim Littlewood (Executive Director of Science) outlined the process and factors involved in the selection of three scenarios of what moves, is created or replicated at Harwell, as shortlisted for further evaluation by the NHM@Harwell Programme Board. A decision on the favoured scenario is a key point in the critical path for delivery of the Programme and will be presented to both the Executive Board and Infrastructure Committee in June prior to submission to the Board of Trustees in July for endorsement.

Dr Littlewood confirmed that further evaluation is ongoing, including the frequency of access to material, which will inform what collections will move. Similarly, a review of library needs across NHM sites is taking place to address the question of data need and how this relates to any of the scenarios and future use of the collections on site. Tring is very much linked into the NHM@Harwell Programme and the Tring Strategy will be presented to the Board in May.

**2241 COP26 (TP 21/10)**

The Director summarised the proposals being developed to support COP26 objectives and details of ongoing discussions with various governmental stakeholders. One of the proposals nearing finalisation is a collaborative project for a nationwide public programme initiative working with schools and community groups to kickstart a decade of urban nature recovery and restoration. The Museum also intends to leverage existing activity and develop new ideas to speak to its audiences in the lead up to, and during, COP26.

**2242 URBAN NATURE PROJECT UPDATE (TP 21/11)**

Clare Matterson (Executive Director of Engagement) provided an update on the Urban Nature Project and the next steps for the project. The Director also took the opportunity to thank the Trustees (and to every member of the Executive Board) who have pledged to support the Project, which is entering the critical phase of fund-raising. It was agreed that provision of £2m is to be set aside to cover any shortfall in cashflow from fundraised income towards UNP, to enable the project to progress on schedule.

**2243 PUBLIC SPACES DEVELOPMENT PLAN (TP 21/12)**

Clare Matterson (Executive Director of Engagement) outlined progress to date, and the next important steps, for developing the future vision and plan for the Public Space Development Programme (PSDP), which were endorsed by the Infrastructure Committee. The proposals (for South Kensington and Tring) have been developed on the principle of providing a bold vision that is balanced with practicality, placing the needs of the visitor at the heart of the scheme. Clare Matterson explained that during the past year, a review has been conducted of the evolution of NHM public spaces from 1886 to the current day and principles had been agreed to steer the work going forward. The focus, in the first instance, will be to develop the Waterhouse Building and Mammals gallery as these galleries are the most popular public spaces.

Simon Patterson (Trustee) emphasised the importance of incorporating technology into the galleries; integrating digital and physical technology could be used to move visitors around spaces to optimise utilisation. The Director also reflected that the scheme provides the opportunity to bring science and conservation work more visibly to the fore for the benefit of NHM visitors.

The Board thanked Clare Matterson for outlining the exciting scheme and looked forward to learning more in May when Trustees will be given the opportunity to tour the galleries.

**Committee reports:**

**2244 REPORT FROM THE AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 26 JANUARY 2021 (TP 21/13)**

Hilary Newiss (Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee) reported on the items discussed at the meeting in January and confirmed that Professor Sir Stephen Sparks will join the Committee replacing Professor Yadvinder Malhi who will join the Infrastructure Committee.

**2245 REPORT FROM THE INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 1 FEBRUARY 2021 (TP 21/14)**

Robert Noel (Chair of the Infrastructure Committee) reported that the inaugural meeting of the Infrastructure Committee focused on the NHM@Harwell Programme and the Public Spaces Development Plan. Robert Noel recorded his thanks to Professor Sir Stephen Sparks for his contribution during his tenure on the Committee.

**2246 INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE (TP 21/14A)**

The Board approved the Terms of Reference.

**2247 REPORT FROM THE SCIENCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 3 FEBRUARY 2021 (TP 21/15)**

Professor Sir Stephen Sparks (Chair of the Science Advisory Committee) reported that the meeting had discussed the evaluation of the three scenarios for the NHM@Harwell Programme as well as digitisation and the green economy challenge. As it was Professor Sir John Beddington's last meeting before retiring from the main Board, Dr Tim Littlewood had thanked Sir John for serving on the Committee and for his consistently noteworthy and thought-provoking contributions, which was hugely appreciated by all.

**2248 UPDATE ON DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY AND PERFORMANCE (TP 21/16)**

Dame Frances Cairncross (Chair of the Development Advisory Committee) reported that in future the DAC should be fleet of foot and less formal and, accordingly, an update on Development activity and performance will be circulated with Board papers in advance of each meeting of the Board of Trustees.

**2249 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Professor Sir John Beddington: Sir John retires from the Board at the end of March 2021 after serving a second term as a Prime Ministerial appointed Trustee. On behalf of the Board, the Chair thanked Sir John for his helpful contribution to the work of the Board and for serving on the Science Advisory Board and Nominations Committee. The Board and Executive wished Sir John well for the future.

**2250 EVENT DATES FOR THE DIARY (TP 21/17)**

Noted

**2251 AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE BOARD MEETINGS (TP 21/18)**

The rolling agenda for future meetings was noted.

**2252 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS**

**2021:**

- 18 May
- 6 July
- 22 September (09.00-17.00 – Annual Trustees' Strategy Day)
- 23 November

**2022:**

- 23 February
- 17 May
- 5 July (Annual staff summer party in the evening)
- 13 September (09.00-17.00 – Annual Trustees' Strategy Day)
- 15 November

