

No 270

**THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM**

**AT A MEETING ON**

**TUESDAY 6 JULY 2021**

**AT 10.00 A.M.**

**Present**

**TRUSTEES**

Lord Green of Hurstpierpoint (Chair)  
Harris Bokhari OBE  
Dame Frances Cairncross DBE FRSE  
Hilary Newiss  
Robert Noel  
Professor Sir Stephen Sparks CBE FRS  
Dr Sarah E Thomas (virtual)  
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)

Keith Jennings (Head of Masterplanning and Projects) – for item 9  
Kathryn Packer (NHM@Harwell Programme Director – for item 9  
Dr Sarah Long (Head of Registry) – for item 11  
Lorraine Cornish (Head of Conservation) – for item 11  
Dan Phelan (Director of Communications, Marketing and Digital) – for items 13 and 14  
Alison Davis (Chief Information Officer) – for item 13  
Dr Andy Purvis (Research Leader) – for item 14

**Preliminary**

**2280 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Professor Yadvinder Malhi FRS CBE and Simon Patterson

**2281 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REGISTER OF INTERESTS (TP 21/37)**

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

**2282 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18 MAY 2021**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Trustees held on 18 May 2021 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

**2283 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 18 MAY 2021 (TP 21/38)**

Dr Matterson had investigated the inclusion of braille descriptions on gallery displays, in response to Mr Harris Bokhari's question, and after consultation concluded that braille is not widely desired by partially sighted groups as alternative mechanisms have been developed. Dr Matterson reassured the Board that improving accessibility remains a major factor when developing spaces and is a key component of the Public Spaces Programme. It was agreed that a proposal covering the broader realm of accessibility will be presented to the Board later in the year.

**Corporate items:**

**2284 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

The Chair provided an update on the two current Trustee recruitment campaigns.

**2285 DIRECTOR'S REPORT (TP 21/39)**

The Trustees received a briefing from the Director on the activities of the Museum since the last meeting in May 2021.

**2286 MUSEUM OPERATING PLAN QUARTERLY REVIEW (TP 21/40)**

The Board noted progress arising from the first quarterly review of the Museum's new one-year Operating Plan, which seeks to provide a clear picture of how activities are progressing and highlighting areas that require attention. Of particular interest was the funding application to accelerate the digitisation of UK-based natural history collections and the Director will share the draft proposal with Professor Sir Stephen Sparks and Professor Dame Janet Thornton before final submission.

**2287 FINANCIAL REVIEW FOR THE PERIOD APRIL – MAY 2021 (TP 21/41)**

The report presented by Neil Greenwood (Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Services) reflected the financial position to May 2021. The Board noted that a recast of the financial plan will be undertaken towards the end of period 3 to reflect adjustments from income and resource requests arising from the Operating Plan.

**Items for approval:**

**2288 2020/21 ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS (TP 21/42)**

Mr Neil Greenwood presented for Trustees' approval the NHM's Annual Report and Accounts 2020/21, the NHM Special Funds Trust Accounts 2020/21 and the NHM Benevolent Fund Accounts 2020/21, and for noting the NHM Trading Company Limited Accounts 2020/21. All the accounts had been considered and reviewed in detail by the Audit and Risk Committee at the June meeting.

The Board's attention was drawn to the letter of support provided by the Museum to the Trading Company underpinning the going concern assessment. This is to reflect the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on self-generated income. The Chair also confirmed that Hilary Newiss (Trustee) and Dr Douglas Gurr (Museum Director) will be joining him as fellow directors of the Trading Company.

The Chair thanked Mr Greenwood and his team for compiling the accounts and to the Audit and Risk Committee for its diligent scrutiny of the documentation. The Board:

1. **Approved** the NHM Annual Report and Accounts 2020/21 (with the agreed amendments to the Governance section)
2. **Approved** the NHM Special Funds Trust Accounts 2020/21
3. **Approved** the NHM Benevolent Fund Accounts 2020/21
4. **Noted** the NHM Trading Company Limited Accounts 2020/21 and the Museum's letter of support.

**2289 NHM@HARWELL – SCENARIO APPROVAL (TP 21/43)**

The Board was asked to approve the scenario for what is moved, created and replicated at the new NHM@Harwell centre. The recommendation is the culmination of an extensive programme of work over the last year including consultation, costings and evaluations. The accompanying paper outlined the benefits of the proposal, budget position and interconnections with other major NHM activities (including public engagement activities). The proposal was endorsed by the Infrastructure Committee.

Dr Tim Littlewood (Executive Director of Science) and Kathryn Packer (NHM@Harwell Programme Director) explained that in developing the recommendation, a holistic approach had been taken across the three Museum sites (South Kensington, Tring and Harwell) to decide what remains at South Kensington with digitisation unifying the organisation as a distributed infrastructure. It is believed that the favoured scenario will create a flagship research and digitisation centre, securing the collections in a purpose-built research infrastructure designed for scientific innovation. The NHM@Harwell Centre will bring together museum collections vital to our understanding of the natural world and co-locate them with cutting-edge facilities encouraging collaborations and partnerships.

Keith Jennings (Head of Masterplanning and Projects) provided the Board with an update on the procurement of the design team and lease negotiations. It is the intention to sign the lease agreement by September.

The Board gave strong support to the proposal and appreciated the complexity of finding a solution to what will be transformational for the future of the NHM. The Board was also impressed by the depth of consultation (with colleagues and external sources) and the transparency of documentation and dialogue with the Board. The scenario is not without risks (particularly the impact of inflation on the budget), but those risks are not uncommon with high profile capital projects. The Board **approved** the recommended scenario.

**2290 MODERN SLAVERY STATEMENT 2020/2021 (TP 21/44)**

The Modern Slavery Act 2015 requires certain organisations to publish an annual slavery and human trafficking statement each year. The statement, prepared by Andy Davies, Procurement Manager, sets out the steps the NHM has taken in 2020/21 to address the risk of labour rights abuse in its supply chains and proposed plans for the forthcoming year.

The Board **approved** the statement.

**2291 ITEM LIST APPROVAL FOR *FANTASTIC BEASTS: THE WONDER OF NATURE* INTERNATIONAL TOUR (TP 21/45)**

Dr Sarah Long (Head of Registry) asked the Board to approve the use of 47 items from the Museum's collection to be included in the touring exhibition of *Fantastic Beasts: the Wonder of Nature* provided that the standard conditions are met as well as any specific conditions. Lorraine Cornish (Head of Conservation) confirmed that the items on the object list have been assessed for touring viability and have been approved by the Heads of Collections, Heads of Department and the Executive Director of Science.

The Board noted the risks and **approved** the specific recommendations and the standard conditions related to items sources by the Museum for the tour (or borrowed for the purposes of the tour) for a period of five years.

**2292 ANNUAL TRUSTEES' STRATEGY DAY – ITEMS FOR THE AGENDA**

The suggested agenda items for the Annual Strategy Day will be added to the draft agenda.

**Items for discussion:****2293 THE DIGITAL MUSEUM (TP 21/46)**

The global pandemic has forced people to view life through a different lens and, in some instances, has forced many of us to conduct much of our lives online. This significant shift has added to the urgency of defining the role of a museum in the digital age bringing into sharp focus the question of *what is a digital museum?* Dan Phelan (Director of Communications, Digital and Marketing) has attempted to identify the challenges and opportunities for the Museum presented by the data and informatics revolution. This initiative will also help shift brand perceptions of the NHM and deliver better value to wider and more diverse audiences who engage with all forms of media.

The Board of Trustees were invited to share their thoughts with the Executive on the suggested roadmap for advancing this initiative. One area of concern was the question of subscription versus open data for research purposes. It was agreed that further debate is required, and the Digital Museum should be added to the Strategy Day agenda.

**2294 BIODIVERSITY INDICATORS PORTAL (TP 21/47)**

Dr Andy Purvis (Research Leader) presented a video introducing a digital product designed to aid policy makers, evidence buildings and scientific advisors to make better biodiversity decisions using robust scientific data developed by the NHM. The portal will highlight biodiversity change and the impact of the factors that drive it enabling decision makers to conserve and preserve biodiversity. The tool is in development, and it is hoped that it will be launched into the public domain in September.

**Regular updates:**

**2295 URBAN NATURE PROJECT UPDATE (TP 21/48)**

Clare Matterson (Executive Director of Engagement) provided an update on the Urban Nature Project and sought Board approval of the business case for the Garden Café, as recommended by the Infrastructure Committee. The Board noted that combining the design and construction of the café with the wider scheme will be the most cost-effective way of delivering the building. The design of the café will, of course, be sympathetic to the Waterhouse Building and the garden and also responds to the visitor surveys indicating that a year-round café is required. However, the café does rely on a capital contribution from the Museum's catering partner and Neil Greenwood (as Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Services) will ensure that any commercial agreement has the right protections for the Museum.

Based on the recommendation of the Infrastructure Committee and the case presented in the paper, the Board of Trustees **approved** the inclusion of the café in the UNP scheme.

**2296 QUARTERLY COLLECTIONS UPDATE (TP 21/49)**

The Board noted the report compiled by Dr Sarah Long. In response to a question regarding the moth infestation, Dr Long explained that this incident was due to a faulty display case and that remedial action had been taken. In addition, new technology is constantly being explored to defend moth infestations (a persistent problem for museums in general).

**Annual reports for noting:**

*These reports have been submitted and approved by the Audit and Risk Committee at the meeting on 29 April 2021.*

**2298 AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21 (TP 21/50)**

The Board noted the contents of the Annual Report previously assessed by the Audit and Risk Committee.

**Committee reports:**

**2299 REPORT FROM THE AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 23 JUNE 2021**

Hilary Newiss (Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee) reported on the items discussed at the meeting in June.

**2300 REPORT FROM THE INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 22 JUNE 2021 (TP 21/51)**

Robert Noel (Chair of the Infrastructure Committee) reported that the Committee had discussed the Energy Centre contract, which is due to expire at the end of 2021 and for which a new tender process was being held. The Board **approved** the proposal that a sub-committee comprising Lord Green, Robert Noel and Dr Douglas Gurr is appointed to approve the award of the Energy Centre contract.

**2301 REPORT FROM THE SCIENCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 23 JUNE 2021 (TP 21/52)**

Professor Sir Stephen Sparks (Chair of the Science Advisory Committee) reported on the items discussed at the meeting in June and was pleased to announce that Dame Jane Francis (Director of the British Antarctic Survey) had now joined the Committee.

**2302 UPDATE ON DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY AND PERFORMANCE (TP 21/53)**

Dame Frances Cairncross (Chair of the Development Advisory Committee) provided an update on recent activity, including the review of the Museum's US based 'International Friends of the NHM 501c3' and discussions on the best way to progress it. She also highlighted the success in securing a **£3,231,900** "Round 2" grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) for the Urban Nature Project.

**2303 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Board gave thanks to Dr Kim Winser (Trustee) who is retiring from the Board and also Frances Allen (Secretary to the Board) who is retiring from the Museum.

**2304 EVENT DATES FOR THE DIARY (TP 21/54)**

Noted

**2305 AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE BOARD MEETINGS (TP 21/55)**

The rolling agenda for future meetings was noted.

**2306 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS**

**2021:**

- 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

