

No 268

**THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM**

**AT A MEETING ON**

**TUESDAY 18 MAY 2021**

**AT 10.00 A.M.**

**Present**

**TRUSTEES**

Lord Green of Hurstpierpoint (Chair)  
Harris Bokhari OBE  
Dame Frances Cairncross DBE FRSE  
Hilary Newiss  
Professor Yadvinder Malhi FRS CBE  
Robert Noel  
Simon Patterson  
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)

Hanna Schieve (Governance, Strategy and Planning Manager) – for item 8  
Alex Burch (Director of Public Programmes) – for items 9 and 10  
Charlotte Stone (Head of Exhibitions and Galleries) – for item 9  
Lucy Clark (Head of Design) – for item 9  
Paul Kitching (Head of the Natural History Museum at Tring) – for item 10  
Keith Jennings (Head of Masterplanning and Planning) – for item 11  
Kathryn Packer (NHM@Harwell Project Director) – for item 11

**Preliminary**

**2253 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Professor Sir Stephen Sparks CBE FRS

**2254 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REGISTER OF INTERESTS (TP 21/19)**

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

**2255 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16 FEBRUARY 2021**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Trustees held on 16 February 2021 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

**2256 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 16 FEBRUARY 2021 (TP 21/20)**

All matters arising are on the meeting's agenda.

**Corporate items:**

### **2257 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

The Chair provided an update on the current Trustee recruitment campaigns to replace Professor Sir John Beddington (who retired from the Board in March 2021) and Dr Kim Winser who retires from the Board in August 2021. Further updates will be provided as the process progresses.

In accordance with good practice, the Chair will be embarking upon the appraisal process and Trustees will be contacted to arrange a time for individual appraisal discussions.

### **2258 DIRECTOR'S REPORT (TP 21/21)**

Trustees received a briefing from the Director on the activities of the Museum since the last meeting in February 2021. Over the last two months, the focus has been on ways to rapidly accelerate the digitisation of the collections and the Executive Board has been scoping initial funding options to facilitate this. The Director will provide a further update at the July meeting of the Board.

The Director was also pleased to report that the Museum reopened to the public on Monday 17 May and visitor numbers and feedback from visitors was very positive.

### **2259 FINANCIAL REVIEW FOR THE PERIOD APRIL – MARCH 2021 (TP 21/22)**

The report presented by Neil Greenwood (Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Services) reflected the financial position to March 2021. As previously indicated, 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, including an award of emergency funding for national museums and funding for capital projects from the DCMS Infrastructure Fund.

A reforecast of the budget to reflect post-reopening financial data will be submitted to the Audit and Risk Committee in June and to Trustees at the July Board meeting.

### **Items for approval:**

#### **2260 GOVERNANCE PRINCIPLES (TP 21/23)**

In accordance with best practice, the NHM Governance Principles consolidates and summaries the principles underlying corporate governance in the Museum, as well as defining the role and conduct of Trustees under the BM Act 1963. Hanna Schieve (Governance, Strategy and Planning Manager) explained that the current NHM Governance Principles (approved in 2013) had been updated and reviewed by the Audit and Risk Committee in April 2021, which had recommended endorsement by the Board of Trustees following incorporation of feedback.

The Board of Trustees approved the document and recommended that it be reviewed every two years.

### **Items for discussion:**

#### **2261 PUBLIC SPACES DEVELOPMENT PLAN (TP 21/24)**

Dr Clare Matterson (Executive Director of Engagement) and the Engagement team presented the Public Space Plan, which is to be delivered as part of the transformation of the Natural History Museum to rejuvenate the galleries and public offer. The reimagining of the galleries will provide the opportunity to have themed collections-focussed galleries linked to significant NHM science research programmes with the ability to reflect latest science. All the galleries will tell a story and underpin science concepts. The galleries will be at the heart of larger national or global initiatives to maximise reach and impact and will be situated in the broader transformation of the NHM in terms of its strategy and related scientific and digital developments.

The programme will take a decadal approach and the first phase covers the 10-year period from now to the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2031, but the success of the proposals is contingent upon funding. Fiona McWilliams (Executive Director of Development) outlined the fundraising approach.

The Board welcomed the proposals and reflected that the pandemic has highlighted the importance of the digital offer, which needs to be a core component of future planning. In this context, emphasis should be directed at

integrating digital technology with the physical experience in the galleries to create a truly immersive experience. This would also help move visitors around spaces to optimise utilisation. Comments included the need to build in flexibility given the longevity of the galleries, to incorporate active learning into the design, to ensure inclusion and diversity were integrated into the plans, to reveal and do more with the architecture and to incorporate *real time events or data* events into the public offer (e.g. live interactions with exploration ships). Such dynamic offerings would ensure repeat visitation. The Board also challenged the team whether it would be possible to make changes at a faster rate.

The Board looked forward to a more detailed update at the Annual Trustees' Strategy Day in September. In the meantime, the digital aspect will be incorporated as part of the goal to accelerate digitisation and proposals will be presented to the Board in July.

#### **2262 TRING DRAFT STRATEGY (TP 21/25)**

Paul Kitching (Head of the NHM at Tring) presented the draft strategy for NHM at Tring. The launch of the Museum Strategy, the commitment to the NHM@Harwell programme, and Tring's eminent Bird Collection provided the opportunity to redefine the purpose of the Tring site in relation to the overall museum as it moves towards being a multi-site organisation. The emerging vision is for Tring to become a hub for UK biodiversity/geodiversity engagement and science, building on the Rothschilds' legacy, the site's geographical location and linking to existing and new partnerships. The rural setting would provide the opportunity for fieldwork training and urban nature activities outside South Kensington. The Bird Collection and associated research is central to the vision and of global importance as the collection is digitised

It is believed that the digitised Bird Collection and fieldwork centre provide the springboard for Tring to metamorphose from a local museum to one that has a global presence. It was noted that digital engagement gave all the Museum sites an opportunity to have an impact that went far beyond just that delivered by its physical visitors.

The Board thanked Paul Kitching for the presentation and looked forward to an update at the November Board meeting when, hopefully, Trustees will have the opportunity to visit the Tring site.

#### **Regular updates:**

#### **2263 NHM@HARWELL (TP 21/26)**

Dr Tim Littlewood (Executive Director of Science) presented an update on the NHM@Harwell programme and confirmed that the single scenario for what moves, is created and replicated at Harwell will be presented to the Board in July. Discussions on the Public Engagement element at Harwell are ongoing and potential opportunities will continue to be explored. In its role as a digital hub, the facility will "open up" the collection by providing access (beyond the physical presence) to a global audience. The strategy is that each of the Museum's three sites (South Kensington, Tring and Harwell) will have a clear science vision based on coherent collections, research and digitisation presence

#### **2264 COP26 (TP 21/10)**

Trustees noted the update in the Director's Report.

#### **2265 URBAN NATURE PROJECT UPDATE (TP 21/26)**

Clare Matterson (Executive Director of Engagement) summarised the work being undertaken on the Urban Nature Project (UNP) and presented a glimpse of some of the interpretative developments on site. The garden is a journey through time - told through both the planting and hard landscaping - and scientific staff have been busy sourcing geological/ palaeontological specimens to bring this story to life. The project team has also engaged with local communities and media to promote the UNP and its ethos. Fiona McWilliams gave an update on the fundraising campaign, including that donations from Trustees and Executive Board had totalled over £1m (including Gift Aid).

**2266 DEWORM<sup>3</sup> PROJECT**

Dr Littlewood summarised the NHM's participation in the DeWorm<sup>3</sup> project funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The project is a large-scale, community cluster randomised trial which seeks to determine the feasibility of interrupting the transmission of intestinal parasitic worms in India, Malawi and Benin. Dr Littlewood thanked the Board for supporting the decision to proceed with, and support the project, throughout its leadership at the NHM. The NHM's role in completing the Intervention phase (Nov 2015 – May 2021) oversaw the completion of over 400 project deliverables, over 1m people integrated into the study, and the delivery of over 890,000 doses of deworming medicine; even with Covid-19 ongoing for the last year. The final surveillance and final evaluation phases will be led by the University of Washington, ending in 2 years.

Dr Littlewood also reported that Prof David Rollinson, Individual Merit Researcher Level 2, NHM Band 1, retired in March after more than 40 years of service at the NHM. His considerable scientific output, with over 330 peer-reviewed publications, underpins a career committed to combatting neglected tropical diseases through the pursuit of field and laboratory parasitology, epidemiology and policy work. A world acclaimed expert in the study, control and elimination schistosomiasis, Prof Rollinson has been honoured and recognised widely for his scientific contributions; 9 medals and other honours. Establishing the NHM's Wolfson Wellcome Biomedical Laboratories and the NHM as a WHO Collaborating Centre for Schistosomiasis, David remains the Director of the *Global Schistosomiasis Alliance* and Editor of *Advances in Parasitology* and will continue to pursue his research as an NHM Scientific Associate.

**Annual reports for noting:**

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

**2267 HEAD OF RISK & ASSURANCE - ANNUAL ASSURANCE TO THE ACCOUNTING OFFICER AND AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE 2020/21 (TP 21/27)**

Noted

**2268 ANNUAL REVIEW OF GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY 2020/21 (TP 21/28)**

Noted

**2269 ANNUAL SECURITY REPORT 2020/21 (TP 21/29)**

Noted

**2270 ANNUAL HEALTH & SAFETY REPORT 2020/21 (TP 21/30)**

Noted.

**2271 ANNUAL COLLECTIONS ASSURANCE 2020/21 (TP 21/31)**

Noted

**Committee reports:****2272 REPORT FROM THE AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 29 APRIL 2021**

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

**2273 REPORT FROM THE INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 4 MAY 2021 (TP 21/32)**

Robert Noel (Chair of the Infrastructure Committee) reported that the meeting had reviewed the NHM@Harwell Programme and progress on the capital projects funded by the DCMS Infrastructure Fund.

An update on the progress of the Energy Centre project had also been given and it had been agreed that a sub-group of the Board should be formed to approve the Energy Centre contract decision to be presented to the Board of Trustees in November for approval. The sub-group will comprise Rob Noel, Lord Green, Hilary Newiss, Dr Doug Gurr and Neil Greenwood.

**2274 UPDATE ON DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY AND PERFORMANCE (TP 21/33)**

Dame Frances Cairncross (Chair of the Development Advisory Committee) reported that the recent meeting had discussed fundraising activity for the Urban Nature Project, including a number of cultivation events that had taken place or were to take place in the near future leading up to the public launch of the Project in September. Dame Frances gave thanks to Trustees for their commitment and contribution to the Urban Nature Project.

**2275 REPORT FROM THE COMMERCIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 6 MAY 2021 (TP 21/33)**

Dr Kim Winser (Chair of the Commercial Advisory Committee) explained that the meeting had reported on activity and performance during the challenging pandemic period. Future focus will be to review businesses where the NHM can make a step change in doing things in a different way to increase performance.

During this period public engagement via the digital offer had been extremely successful and the need to continue to enrich the content and offerings was emphasised. It had been agreed that the benefits of having booked tickets for general admissions was considerable and it would be important to develop a clear plan of benefits to the visitor as the current restrictions began to lift. The Licensing business had seen significant growth and its activity (particularly partner-driven licensing) had exceeded the targets.

**2276 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Braille descriptions for exhibitions: Dr Matterson will respond in due course to Mr Harris Bokhari's question about braille descriptions.

**2277 EVENT DATES FOR THE DIARY (TP 21/34)**

Noted

**2278 AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE BOARD MEETINGS (TP 21/35)**

The rolling agenda for future meetings was noted.

**2279 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS**

**2021:**

- 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

