

THE TRUSTEES OF THE NATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM

THREE HUNDRED AND SIXTY-NINTH MEETING

14:00 THURSDAY 17 SEPTEMBER 2020

HELD REMOTELY BY VIDEO CONFERENCE DUE TO COVID-19 EPIDEMIC

MINUTES

**Trustees present:**

Sir Charles Dunstone, Chair  
Joyce Bridges  
Dr Helen Czerski  
Dr Aminul Hoque  
Alastair Marsh  
Jeremy Penn  
Eric Reynolds  
Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope

**In attendance:**

Paddy Rodgers	Director, Royal Museums Greenwich
Andy Bodle	Director, Operations and HR
Kate Seeckts	Director, Development
Gail Symington	Director, Collections and Public Engagement
Chris Walker	Director, Finance and IT
Karen Eden-Tuxford	Head of Commerce & Visitor Experience
Jane Costantini	Governance and Museum Records Manager

*~Board Matters~*

The Chairman advised the Board that they would shortly be issued with a self-assessment of effectiveness questionnaire for completion and review at the November 2020 meeting.

*~Governance Session~*

- 1. Apologies**  
Professor Julian Dowdeswell, Dr Fiona Butcher
- 2. Declaration of relevant interests related to this meeting**  
None other than those previously registered.
- 3. Draft Minutes of Board meeting 368 of 9 July 2020**  
The Board **agreed** the minutes to be a true record of the meeting. The Chair of the Board certified the minutes electronically after the meeting.

#### 4. **Re-opening the Museum update**

The Head of Commerce & Visitor Experience reminded the Board that we had, since late July, been gradually re-opening our sites so that by the first week in September all our venues apart from the Peter Harrison Planetarium and Royal Observatory, South site. Thorough planning and learning as we went along has been key to our success as visitor and staff feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. We are finding there are some positive outcomes to the changes we have made as pre-booking provides evidence of our busiest times and also provides opportunities for selling guidebooks and memberships and increasing donations. Our online shop has also performed well with sales around 14% higher than last year.

Trustees asked how our visitor numbers compared with the pre-Covid period and were advised that we are getting around 20% of our usual numbers. There is a similar picture across the sector. Trustees were keen to know if we can boost our numbers by holding special events and were told that this is an area we are actively developing.

There were no further questions and Trustees thanked the Head of Commerce & Visitor Experience for her presentation and to the staff for their hard work during this challenging period.

#### 5. **Staff Update**

The Director, Operations & Human Resources updated the Board on the staffing situation. He reported that the flexible furloughing scheme was working well, if a little complex to administer, and we have made savings from the salaries budget due to reduced recruitment, reduced overtime and deferral of pay awards. We are working up plans for strengthening equity and inclusion for current and future staff across the areas of recruitment, retention, training and development, pay and benefits. We recently completed our first online induction programme which enabled more operational staff to take part than previously and the virtual monthly Director's briefings have been very well received by staff, so we are finding that the current trying circumstances are also offering us opportunities for changing things for the better once the pandemic is over.

Trustees were keen to know if we would be using the Government schemes to offer young people opportunities for training and employment and were informed that this is being actively investigated. Trustees were also keen to hear that as many jobs as possible would be protected and were told that we were awaiting the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review in the autumn before we can reply definitively but we are doing our utmost to avoid redundancies.

#### 6. **Security and Estates Update**

The Director, Operations & Human Resources then briefed the Board on recent work carried out in our buildings and grounds. The cause of the internal leak in the Special Exhibitions Gallery is still being investigated by surveyors. One of the panes of glass on the *Cutty Sark* canopy was shattered during the hot weather in August although the extreme heat may not necessarily have been the cause.

*This section redacted in accordance with Freedom of Information Act 2000 Section 31(1)(a) the prevention or detection of crime.*

There were no questions arising and the Chairman thanked the Director, Operations & Human Resources for his presentations.

## **7. Collections and Public Engagement Update**

The Director, Collections and Public Engagement started her presentation by showing Trustees a video setting out the vision for our content strategy entitled 'Charting our Course'. This seeks to set out who we are, why we are here, our guiding concepts and how we are relevant in people's lives.

Next, an update on Exhibitions was provided and Trustees were informed that this year's Insight Investment Astronomy Photography of the Year competition had been managed entirely online including the awards ceremony whilst the exhibition will be opening on site in October. Final preparations were being made to open 'Exposure: Lives at Sea' in our New Insights Gallery, scheduled for November and it is hoped that 'Tudors to Windsors: British Royal Portraits' will be opening in February 2021. 'Faces of a Queen' and 'Woburn Treasures' have been extended to Easter 2021 and a soundscape by conceptual artist Peter Adjaye has recently been installed in the Queen's House. A national outreach project using the Armada portrait and aimed at improving oracy skills has been successfully piloted with six schools and will shortly be rolled out nationally. Some additions to our Atlantic Worlds Gallery, based on work with community groups, which had been planned prior to lockdown, have now been installed. Our Science Learning team have reached over 1800 people with their Solar System Discovery live planetarium shows and Theories and Queries Q&A sessions and they have produced almost seventy Observatory Online videos with 46,000 views. The 2020 Presenter Network Conference had 240 participants, far more than previously. Finally, we commissioned the BLKBRD Collective to create some artwork on the theme of identity which we plan to display at our entrances. This year's events to commemorate International Slavery Remembrance Day took place largely online apart from an Emancipation Ceremony on the banks of the Thames and a live performance by the London Lucumi Choir.

Trustees were impressed by the volume and breadth of work being done and thanked the Director, Collections and Public Engagement very much for her presentation and for the work done by the staff.

## **8. Development, Marketing and Events Update**

The Director, Development informed the Trustees that the team had won two awards from National Arts Fundraising for our Patrons scheme and we are managing to retain 96% of our Patrons which compares favourably with our peers. We have been very successful in securing funding for our new photography exhibition 'Exposure: Lives at Sea' and we have also secured a second grant from the Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund for our projects working with people with dementia.

The Corporate Partnerships climate is more difficult and having had our best year last year for Memberships we are expecting this year's income to be around half of that last year. Whilst we are pleased to report that we have retained most of our existing Members, some renewals have dropped so we are working hard to win back these lapsed Members.

Moving onto commercial events, the Director, Development reported that these had collapsed during the last few months but on a more positive note, most private events such as weddings have postponed to next year and the Greenwich Comedy Festival had sold out. Preparations were being made to bring back the ice rink this winter; we will have a larger rink than last year to allow for social distancing. Filming enquiries had also increased recently which is thought to be due to the fact that film crews are unable to travel overseas.

Trustees asked whether the success of the ice rink may be jeopardised by a second wave of the virus. The Director, Finance and IT responded that this risk has been addressed with the supplier in the contract negotiations and we were comfortable that the Museum would not be exposed to risk should it have to be cancelled.

*At this point Helen Czernski had to leave the meeting due to another commitment.*

The Director, Development finished by providing Trustees with a review of marketing initiatives undertaken during the summer months, focussing on local and family audiences and emphasising our venues' position surrounded by green spaces, making a great day out.

Trustees had no further questions and thanked the Director, Development for her presentations.

#### **9. Business Plan post Covid-19**

The Director, Finance & IT informed Trustees that based on the visitor numbers since reopening, recovery may take longer than originally forecast with a return to 2019 levels now not anticipated until Summer 2022 and our modelling at The Royal Observatory is now to plateau at 75% of previous numbers by this date as most visitors here were from overseas in recent years. Our self-generated income has been negligible during the past few months but there has also been a significant reduction in expenditure. Whilst we think we should manage until the end of the financial year, we are awaiting the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review before making longer term predictions. A flexible and nimble approach to the developing situation is essential. The situation regarding capital funding seems a little more positive as there may be opportunities to get financial support towards our essential maintenance backlog.

The Trustees sought reassurance that our financial position was secure until the end of the financial year. The Director, Finance & IT reminded Trustees that the £0.5m additional contingency put aside for Brexit remained intact and along with using some of our reserves if required the Executive remained confident that the forecast £1m deficit for 2020/21 was manageable. A question was raised regarding expenditure for 2021-22 and the Director, Finance & IT stated that the current projection included expenditure relating to postponed projects

from this year but there are some clear opportunities to make savings and we will be working with the Senior Management Team over the coming weeks to identify efficiencies. Overall, the Executive remained committed to working within a balanced budget from 2021/22 onwards.

There were no further questions, and the Trustees thanked the Director, Finance & IT for his presentation.

*At this point Dr Hoque had to leave the meeting due to another commitment.*

**10. Director's Report**

The Director's Report set out the approach we have made to DCMS. As stated by the Director, Finance & IT we are encouraging our Senior Management Team to take more responsibility in managing costs. The Director outlined some potential capital projects, funding permitting, including the second phase of redevelopment of our storage facilities at Kidbrooke in collaboration with the Horniman Museum and some vital works to the Royal Observatory Greenwich in the run up to the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2025.

*This section redacted in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 S. 36 prejudicial to the effective conduct of public affairs and S. 43 (2) Commercial Interests exemption.*

There were no further questions and the Trustees thanked the Director for his report.

**11. Matters arising from the information in Volume B/AOB**

Trustees asked for an update on the finalisation of the Annual Report and Accounts and, in particular, on the Going Concern statement. The Director, Finance & IT stated that we are pushing towards resolution and were aiming for it to be signed off at the November Audit Committee.

Trustees were very impressed with the paper on 'Equality – underrepresented communities in our public offer' and were keen to know when the Trustees group's involvement would commence. The Director undertook to contact those concerned shortly to further this.

There were no further matters raised and the meeting concluded.