

THE TRUSTEES OF THE NATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM

THREE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY FOURTH MEETING

14:30 THURSDAY 16 SEPTEMBER 2021

HELD IN THE BOARDROOM

MINUTES

Trustees present:

Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope Chair
Joyce Bridges
Dr Fiona Butcher
Dr Helen Czerski
Eric Reynolds
Jeremy Penn
Professor Julian Dowdeswell (via MS Teams)
Alastair Marsh (via MS Teams)

In attendance:

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

Prior to the Board meeting Trustees visited the ORNC, meeting with ORNC Trustees and touring the site with the aim of increasing collaboration between the two organisations.

~Board Matters~

- i. Update on the appointment of Trustees and Chair
Trustees were advised that the recruitment campaign closed on 12 September with 27 applicants, 30% female and 16% from a BAME background. Jeremy Penn confirmed that a date had been selected for the sift in October with interviews scheduled for late November.

~Governance Session~

- 1. Apologies**
None received.
- 2. Declaration of relevant interests related to this meeting**
None other than those previously registered.

3. Draft Minutes of Board meeting 373 of 8 July 2021

The Board **agreed** the minutes to be a true record of the meetings. The Chair of the Board certified the minutes accordingly.

4. Visitor update

The Head of Commerce and Visitor Experience informed Trustees that in July and August we welcomed just over 215,000 visitors across the sites, seeing an increase in weekly visitation from around 11,500 to 26,000 during the holiday period. 74% of visitors continue to book online but we are seeing more walk-ups (21%) than in previous months since re-opening. We ran a number of offers and promotions over the summer period and we have increased the capacity for the PHP and reopened AHOY! In terms of ticketing the audience split was 69% adult 4% student 27% child. Core visitors were 88% of visits with Members making up 8% and Travel Trade 4%. *Cutty Sark* was performing well compared to our other sites with its more convenient location and greater family appeal cited as being amongst the likely contributing factors. Retail performance for July and August was good with spend per visitor slightly up on 2019 levels.

Trustees had noted some gallery closures and were advised that this was in response to continuing staffing level challenges due to isolation requirements and sickness. The Executive undertook to review the current situation to ensure closures were minimised. In response to the relative success of the *Cutty Sark* in attracting visitors, Trustees were keen to understand more about the contributing factors. The Head of Commerce and Visitor Experience explained that we are in the process of analysing the various reasons (marketing initiatives, convenient - partly outdoors - location, appeal to family audiences) to see if any of these can be applied to our other sites. Trustees commented that the ROG is disadvantaged situated as it is at the top of the hill and asked if transport options could be considered. This has been trialled in the past but it was agreed that it would be worth revisiting.

There were no further questions and the Chair thanked the Head of Commerce and Visitor Experience for her update.

5. HR update

A paper detailing planned changes to the management structure had been sent to Trustees in advance of the meeting. The Head of Human Resources summarised the proposals and invited questions from the Board.

Trustees were keen to understand the rationale for the changes. The Director explained that under the previous structure, directors were advocates for their area rather than necessarily championing the interests of the whole Museum. The Senior Management Team had no clear way of reporting to the Executive and consequently the process for decision making was slow. The new structure should allow the Management and Operations Team to get on with the day to day running of the Museum, whilst the Senior Leadership Team and Directors focus on strategic planning and larger projects.

Trustees were generally supportive of the plans but there were concerns around the burden of responsibility being shared by fewer directors than before. The Director acknowledged this as a potential risk but providing the Management and Operations Team works as envisaged, some of the smaller day to day

distractions and decisions should be removed from the Senior Leadership Team. Trustees were also keen to understand where Research and Collections, Finance, Digital and the *Cutty Sark* fitted into the plans. Research and Collections will fall under Director, Collections and Public Engagement (current title); Finance shall continue to come under Chris Walker with a new high calibre Head of Finance joining the Senior Leadership Team shortly; and each of the sites will have its own General Manager, reporting to Head of Commerce and Visitor Experience who will champion all aspects of their respective sites. Digital is recognised as a key area for development and touches all areas of the Museum's activities. We are intending to collaborate with 'One by One', an International Research Consortium led by the University of Leicester, helping to develop digitally competent museums. They should help us establish our strengths and weaknesses and assist us with future planning.

Trustees noted that the final details of the new management structure were currently being worked through. They requested that further detail of the responsibilities at each level of the organisation should be presented to the Board at the next meeting in the form of a wiring diagram or something similar. There were no further questions and Trustees thanked the Head of HR for her update.

6. Finance Director's Report

A detailed report of the financial position had been circulated prior to the meeting. The Director, Finance & IT summarised the situation by stating that admissions performance over the summer was significantly down on pre Covid levels. Visitor numbers at the NMM and ROG were also down against original 21/22 budget but are on track at Cutty Sark. Costs are reasonably well controlled but income is still the major variable. Currently we are anticipating a deficit of £2m for 2021/22 which is within the additional contingent Covid funding provided by DCMS, and we therefore predict breakeven on this basis. The situation for 2022/23 and beyond looks challenging assuming a 3 year Spending Review settlement that DCMS predict will be 'at best' flat real cash, and our focus is now on rebuilding audiences and a viable business model for the future.

Trustees sought reassurance that the additional DCMS Covid support was guaranteed and asked what would happen if there was a further lockdown and forced closure of the Museum. The Director, Finance & IT confirmed that we could be confident in the DCMS support for 2021-22 and that should there be another period of closure this financial year the additional funding would cover the forecast admissions income. Trustees queried the proposed levels of spending and were advised that whilst we are being careful to manage costs, we are also seeking to invest in our programme, collections and estate in order to re-build our audience and encourage repeat visitation.

There were no further questions and the Board **approved** the Finance Director's Report.

7. Director's Report

The Director advised the Board that a new Secretary of State for DCMS, Nadine Dorries, had been appointed, replacing Oliver Dowden. The Director invited questions around his report which had provided updates on the Comprehensive

Spending Review, strategy, programming, research funding grants, the ORNC and staffing.

Trustees raised questions around the likely timing of the CSR announcement and were told that we had not yet been given an indication on a date but it is not expected before November. The Board also requested clarification on the planned work with the ORNC and were told that both parties were working towards implementing a Master Services Agreement to create a base of mutual understanding and co-operation.

There were no further questions arising from the Director's Report and the Chair and Trustees thanked the Director for his informative update.

8. Development Update

The Director, Development and Communications updated Trustees on recent developments around the Sackler Trust. Trustees were asked to consider whether they would be favourable to the acceptance of grants in light of recent actions by the Trust. Trustees asked for more information before considering this further and the Executive committed to coming back to the Board at a future meeting once more information is available.

9. The Digital Museum

This was covered earlier in the meeting under item 5.

10. Collection Services update

Daniel Martin, Head of Collection Services, joined the meeting to provide an update on the activities of the Collections Services team. Starting with an overview of the staffing situation he explained that over the last two years they had worked hard at changing the structure and culture of the team aiming to increase staff autonomy.

In the coming months the team will oversee the review of the Collections Development Policy aiming to enforce sustainable collecting, active curatorship and collections management of existing collections – making better use of what we have - with a focus on rationalisation and reducing our existing footprint.

The vast majority of conservation staff time is taken up with support work for the exhibitions, rotations, loans in and out, acquisitions and the general day-to-day collections based care and preservation required to keep our objects on display and accessible. However, in addition we have several conservation-led initiatives, developing our expertise and our reputation as sector leaders.

For *Cutty Sark*, the new Nannie figurehead project was a great success with excellent press coverage. We have commissioned external experts Donald Insall Associates to lead the Conservation Management Plan to inform our conservation approach and any major capital projects for the next 10-15 years, as well as providing a comprehensive assessment of significant material on the ship.

The new Cutty Sark Forum aims to be a more collaborative forum with other shipkeepers across the country sharing best practice on issues affecting us all.

The Head of Collection Services concluded the presentation by saying that he had recently taken over responsibility for the Library and Archive team and the first priority for this area would be a team structure review.

Trustees acknowledged that it is not always easy to foresee what will be seen as interesting and relevant in the future and were keen to understand the process for acquisitions and disposals. They were advised that the Collections Development Committee comprised members of the Collections Services Team, the Curatorial team as well as the Director and Director of Collections and Public Engagement and that potential acquisitions and disposals are scrutinised carefully.

There were no further questions and the Chairman thanked the Head of Collections Services for his presentation.

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

The Board offered their congratulations for the recent research funding awards and enquired whether there would be opportunities to visit the research vessel, the *Sir David Attenborough*, whilst at Greenwich in October. The Director, Development & Communications stated that whilst we shall try, regrettably it is not thought likely due to Covid restrictions, but we are in the process of organising a number of events that weekend in collaboration with the British Antarctic Survey, as highlighted in the Director's Report.

There were no further matters raised and the meeting concluded.

Minutes certified by Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope, Chair

19.11.21