

THE TRUSTEES OF THE NATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM

THREE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY NINTH MEETING

09.30 THURSDAY 27 OCTOBER 2022

HELD IN THE BOARDROOM

MINUTES

Trustees present:

Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope (Chair)
Professor Clare Anderson
Lance Batchelor
Dr Fiona Butcher
Dr Helen Czerski
Sir Stephen Deuchar
Professor Julian Dowdeswell
Murdoch MacLennan
Alastair Marsh
William Nye
Jeremy Penn
Professor Andrew Thompson

In attendance:

Paddy Rodgers	CEO, Royal Museums Greenwich
Gail Symington	Executive Creative Director
Chris Walker	Executive Business & Operations Director
John Avberhota	Head of People & Culture
Karen Eden-Tuxford	Head of Commerce & Visitor Experience
Jane Costantini	Governance and Museum Records Manager

~Governance Session~

Trustees were joined by the Director and Governance Manager only for agenda items 1 to 5.

1. Apologies

Apologies received from Lucy Cooke, Head of Development.

2. Declaration of relevant interests related to this meeting

No relevant interests were declared.

3. Draft Minutes of Board meeting 377 of 28 April 2022

The Board agreed the minutes to be a true record of the meeting. The Chair of the Board certified the minutes accordingly. An amendment was requested to the membership of the Academic Awards Committee on the Committees list on page 14. This was noted and has been rectified.

4. Board self-assessment of effectiveness outcomes

This section redacted in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 S. 36 prejudicial to the effective conduct of public affairs.

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5. Update on Chair and Committee recruitment process

The Chairman reminded Trustees that the deadline for applicants for the role of RMG Chair was Friday 4 November at midday. Once received applications would be forwarded to all Trustees and DCMS will be kept informed during the consultation period. We would be expecting the new Chair to take a leading role in helping the Development team to secure funding for the 'First Light' project. The Chairman also drew Trustees' attention to the various committee vacancies, for which volunteers were welcome, again by Friday 4 November.

6. Director's Report

The Director began by updating the Board on a number of recent events: The Diwali programme again proved exceptionally popular, attracting 15,000 visitors overall, many of whom from the 20-30 age bracket, and probably many of whom are not from our typical visitor profile. The display of the Spanish Ensign in the run up to Trafalgar Day, and the associated talks by staff, attracted another 500 people, so whilst on a different scale to the Diwali events, demonstrates an audience for this type of engagement.

The partial solar eclipse earlier in the week had attracted significant media attention and as it was half-term week, our staff reached out beyond the confines of the Observatory and handed viewing glasses to families in the park.

The Director went on to outline some of the challenges we are currently facing: Staffing – particularly in areas where skills are sought across all sectors, such as IT and Digital. The Director asked Trustees to consider if they have any relevant connections in these areas.

Energy – we need to decide soon how we plan to supply power to the new buildings at the ROG and again if anyone has any experience in this area it would be welcomed. Dr Czerski suggested she might be able to assist on this.

Funding – is heavily dependent on visitor regrowth. With a weak pound we are hopeful to attract foreign visitors, particularly from the US.

When asked if they had any questions on the Director's written report, Trustees were keen to understand the financial implications on the ambitious astronomy fellowship programme. The Director stated that there were plenty of astrophysics graduates who might welcome the opportunity to gain experience in public presenting.

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It was acknowledged that whilst not many in the cultural sector have done this type of project well (with the notable exception of the Smithsonian Museums in the US), we should be confident in reaching out to digital partners. The possibility of attracting some digital expertise to the Board was suggested in the form of a digital entrepreneur and also the Board Apprenticeship schemes might open some doors in this area. The idea of holding a 'hackathon' was also suggested as a way of generating ideas and inspiring interest from the technical sector.

This section redacted in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 S. 36 prejudicial to the effective conduct of public affairs.

There were no further questions and Trustees thanked the Director for his report which was **noted**.

7. People and Culture update

The Chairman welcomed John Avberhota to his first Trustee Board meeting since starting as Head of People and Culture this summer. The Trustees were then provided with an overview of the People and Culture team, the current challenges and future priorities, the most significant of which is the current pay and rewards review which began in September and is scheduled to complete in February 2023.

In response to questions from the Board, Trustees were told that the unions had responded positively to the recent pay awards, the caveat being that they would have liked a higher award of course, but overall relations with the unions are currently good. The Director added that given the restrictions we were working under and bearing in mind the coming challenges, a good balance was achieved. He added that in terms of recruitment our main issues continued to be those areas which are not specific to our sector such as IT and events management.

There were no further questions for the Head of People and Culture so the Chairman thanked him for his update.

8. Visitor update

The Head of Commerce and Visitor Experience informed the Board that we had welcomed 550,000 visitors this quarter, an increase of 157,000 over our initial forecast. Admissions income was £1.3m, representing an increase of £265,000 above initial forecast. Retail sales generated £683,000, £94,000 above target. The *Cutty Sark*, whilst a little behind target, is not far off our 2019 numbers and overall we are currently running c. 466,000 behind 2019 numbers so we anticipate achieving a total of around 70% of our 2019 figures by year end.

Trustees were keen to understand the potential impact of the cost of living crisis and were informed that following recent surveys, it is thought that whilst people may cut back in some areas, visiting museums was considered to enhance well-being and therefore is hopefully less likely to be cut. Trustees were delighted to learn that we have just won the Best Large Museum in the Family Friendly Museum Awards 2022.

There were no further questions or comments and the Board thanked the Head of Commerce and Visitor Experience for her presentation.

9. Finance Report

The Executive Business & Operations Director informed Trustees that pre-Covid we welcomed just under 3 million visitors in 2019/2020, whilst this year we are anticipating around 1.7 million. We hope that by 2023/24 we will exceed 2 million visitors. He reminded the Board that at the last meeting we were predicting a £462K deficit but visitor numbers had continued to outperform expectation, in particular at the ROG, and we now anticipate break even with a modest contingency of £400k. However, we are facing significant deficits over the coming three years as we will no longer be in receipt of DCMS Covid support payments and also due to the expected closure of the ROG during the First Light

construction phase. The continued lack of visitors from Asia has a significant impact as this market represented 15-20% of our admissions income.

In terms of future expenditure, we were pleased to be able to implement London Living Wage earlier this year, but since then it has increased by a further £1 an hour, so we are already behind the curve. We have been relatively fortunate thus far in terms of increases in utility prices as we purchase through the Crown Commercial Services framework which includes forward hedging so the full impact of the price rises will not be felt until the final quarter of the year and into the new financial year.

There may be some scope for implementing a more ambitious, more targeted admission pricing structure in the future and Trustees were reminded just how significant increases in visitation are in terms of our income, an additional 100,000 visitors at our paying sites, represents roughly an additional £1 million in revenue. Next, Trustees were shown a 20 year illustration of admissions figures to the Royal Observatory from 2009/10 to 2029/30. In 2009/10 we received 1.6 million visitors (with largely free admissions), which dipped initially when charging commenced, but which peaked again to around one million visitors in the pre-Covid period. This shows what is achievable in terms of capacity if, after reopening, the offer is sufficiently attractive to tap into the large audience who are inherently interested in space, time and astronomy.

The Executive Business & Operations Director concluded his presentation by setting out the financial commitments for the First Light project. As First Light was going to be discussed as a separate item later in the meeting, questions were deferred until then. The Chairman thanked the Executive Business & Operations Director for his Finance Report which was **noted**.

10. Risk Management Framework

The Head of Finance, Tanya Hilborne, joined the meeting to answer any questions arising from the paper which had been circulated to Trustees prior to the meeting. The Chair of the Audit Committee, Mr Alastair Marsh, commented that the Audit Committee had been very pleased to receive the Risk and Control Framework which followed the so-called 3 lines of defence model. Turning to the list of risks on the Risk Register Trustees asked whether we should include a risk around contested histories as this could present a reputational risk potentially from both sides of the debate. After some discussion Trustees asked the Directors to consider adding this to the Register and provide an update to the Audit Committee. Another suggestion was that risks from extreme weather should be added, as torrential rain and extreme heat were becoming increasingly problematic. Trustees commented that they expected there to be a separate risk register concerning the First Light project and the Directors confirmed this to be the case.

The Chairman informed new Trustees that earlier in the year, the Board had considered the position with regards to donations from the Sackler Family and it had been agreed that whilst we would not remove the name on the Pacific Encounters Gallery as this related to a previous agreement in 2018, we shall not be accepting any further support from the Sackler Family Trust.

There were no further questions arising from the Risk Management Framework but it was agreed that the points raised by the Board regarding the Register should be brought back to the Audit Committee in the new year. The Chairman thanked the Head of Finance for her work.

11. First Light update

The Executive Creative Director introduced the First Light architect, Jamie Fobert, to the Board and provided a brief overview of the proposed visitor routes and the suggested content of each space. Mr Fobert then took the Board through a comprehensive presentation of the redevelopment plans, explaining the current constraints of the site, the history behind some of the current buildings, from the 1676 Flamsteed House by Sir Christopher Wren through to more recent additions, and then presented the current proposed designs. He explained that since the site currently combined both inside and outside visitor areas, some of the new additions, such as the entrance pavilion and the external stairwells, would not be completely closed in, but rather would benefit from a roof to shelter from the rain, or excessive sunlight. This would be more cost effective as well as allowing the visitor to transition from inside to outside spaces more comfortably.

Trustees were keen to understand the geological, structural, safety and cost implications of the underground spaces and were told in terms of safety there would be two means of escape. We are working closely with Historic England on all aspects of the projects and they are broadly supportive of the underground spaces which are, in their view, preferable to additions above ground. In terms of cost, the two underground spaces represent around half of the total building costs. The Directors were also asked to consider whether we are confident we have the content to fill these spaces. Trustees remarked that if budget dictated a smaller scale project, decisions would have to be made on the essential elements versus the 'nice to haves'. It was generally agreed that the entrance pavilion will be a key element. A question was raised regarding the proportionality of the stairwell leading to the Great Equatorial Telescope. The architect stated that in order to accommodate a lift, this was the smallest possible addition. The Director added that access to the GET had always been problematic and by locating the stairwell outside we will be able to remove the existing internal stairs which will mean we gain valuable additional space inside. *This section redacted in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 S. 36 prejudicial to the effective conduct of public affairs.*

There were no further questions from the Board for the architect, so the Chairman thanked Mr Fobert for his presentation and he left the meeting.

12. Development Update

The Director presented a short overview of the current fundraising developments on behalf of the Head of Development who was unable to attend the meeting. Trustees had already received a full update report from her prior to the meeting.

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The Chairman informed the Board that we shall shortly be forming a 'First Light' Steering Group including some Trustees to oversee the project, ensuring that it is running to time and to budget. Any interested Trustees were asked to put themselves forward as part of the current review of committee membership. It was noted that some grants and foundations could be approached at an earlier stage than currently anticipated and the Directors were asked to produce a timeline of who to approach when.

There were no further questions or comments and the Chairman thanked the Director for his update.

13. Neptune/Ocean Court roof project

The Executive Business and Operations Director provided Trustees with a brief update on progress since the last Board meeting. Willmott Dixon Interiors have been appointed as Principal Contractor on Design & Build basis through the SCAPE framework. There has been a lot of engagement across the many museum departments who will be impacted by the work and who have an interest in the improvements which the project will deliver. We are aiming to present the first stage Treasury 'Green Book' business case by 11 November, with the Full Business Case submission due in March 2023, we are aiming to complete the project by March 2025.

The Directors were asked to check whether the proposed name change from Neptune Court to Ocean Court needed any formal approval from Historic England for example. *Subsequent enquiries from the Estates team to Historic England have indicated that they (HE) are not aware of any requirement to have formal approval for a name change.*

There were no further questions and the Chairman thanked the Executive Business and Operations Director for his update which was duly **noted**.

14. Collections Disposal

The Board were asked to consider a number of proposed disposals as detailed in a paper circulated prior to the meeting. The Executive Creative Director was asked whether destruction was an appropriate course of action and she informed the Board that destruction was only considered if all other recommended alternatives had been exhausted and it was very much a last resort. There were no further questions and the Board **approved** the proposed disposals.

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

This section redacted in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 S. 36 prejudicial to the effective conduct of public affairs.

There were no further matters arising from the Volume B papers and the meeting concluded.

Minutes certified by Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope, Chair

20.1.23