

THE TRUSTEES OF THE NATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM

THREE HUNDRED AND SEVENTIETH MEETING

10:00 THURSDAY 19 NOVEMBER 2020

HELD REMOTELY BY VIDEO CONFERENCE DUE TO COVID-19 EPIDEMIC

MINUTES

Trustees present:

Sir Charles Dunstone, Chair
Joyce Bridges
Dr Helen Czerski
Professor Julian Dowdeswell (until 11 a.m.)
Dr Fiona Butcher
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

Hannah Cunliffe (for item 12) Director, National Historic Ships - UK

~Board Matters~

i. Self-assessment of Board effectiveness

The collated responses to the questionnaire had been circulated prior to the meeting and the Chair invited Trustees to comment. It was agreed that further consideration should be given in areas where a neutral response had been returned.

ii. Preparations for appointment of Chair (November 2021)

The Director advised the Board that we were starting proceedings to look for a new Chair to take over from Sir Charles when he steps down at the November 2021 meeting. All current Trustees are eligible to apply as Chair and, should anyone from current Board be successful, their period of tenure would be four years. All appointments are subject to approval of the Minister for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and the recruitment process is managed by the Public Appointments Team at DCMS. The Director aims to speak with all Trustees on this matter in the coming week.

~Governance Session~

1. **Apologies**

Dr Aminul Hoque

2. **Declaration of relevant interests related to this meeting**

None other than those previously registered.

3. **Draft Minutes of Board meeting 369 of 17 September 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. **Commerce and Visitor Experience update**

The Head of Commerce & Visitor Experience stated that over 59,000 visitors had been welcomed in September and October which was 7% lower than our revised forecasts and 87% lower than last year for the same period. However, weekends remain popular, with most time slots fully booked. The Peter Harrison Planetarium pilot was successful, with 1900 visitors attending with an income of just over £12,000.

Retail performed well, 5% above forecast with spend per visitor up. The online shop continued to perform well, 71% up against last year generating income of £67,000 so far this financial year. In September, the Night Sky Underground Map range was launched in collaboration with TfL and was featured on Youtube. At the same time our IIAPY range in support of the exhibition was unveiled. Sales from both ranges are doing well. A donation option has been added to the checkout to support further income generation and we are also showcasing some of our products through Amazon Shop to reach new audiences and grow sales.

The publishing programme for 2020 will deliver 18 titles across a range of subjects and audiences with an annual income forecast to be £90,000.

Trustees were keen to understand how we can further exploit the opportunities of online sales and to maximise publicity around the new ranges. The Head of Commerce & Visitor Experience confirmed that they work closely with the RMG Press team wherever possible to publicise our products. There were no further questions and Trustees thanked the Head of Commerce & Visitor Experience for her presentation.

5. **Staff Update**

The Director, Operations & Human Resources updated the Board on the staffing situation. He reported that there had been only a handful of Covid related cases experienced at the Museum thus far, mostly self-isolation due to contact with people testing positive or with mild symptoms themselves. Colleagues have demonstrated great agility in adapting to the fast changing situation immediately prior to the second lockdown. Our total furlough claim, made up to end of September, was £1.859m and we have made significant payroll savings this year.

The HR team have recently launched a reverse mentoring initiative for Senior Managers who will be matched with non-white junior staff for conversations on barriers to inclusion within RMG. The Collective, a focus group drawn from staff to consider and recommend actions relating to Black and Ethnic Minority staff and visitors, identified the need for a Multifaith Space on the Bridge which will be available for visitors, staff and volunteers alike.

Our Curators Emeritus programme has been reviewed and updated with several renewals and four new appointments offered. Individuals benefit from the

continuing association of a national institution with an international reputation. The Museum benefits by widening a pool of expertise available for cooperation on projects, partnering in publications or mentoring those professionals starting out on their careers. In total we now have 23 appointments – 18 former curators, 4 conservators and lately our first ever astronomer.

6. Security and Estates Update

The Director, Operations & Human Resources then briefed the Board on recent developments regarding security and our buildings and grounds. Following the recent terrorist incidents in France and Vienna, the UK state of alert has increased to 'Severe'. All staff have been notified, vigilance has been stepped up and online training made available.

Works delayed at 2019-20 financial year end due to the pandemic are now complete. Work included emergency lighting and chiller replacements and lift upgrades. The leak in the Special Exhibitions Gallery and transit room has been contained without any risk to objects. Works to address the leak are scheduled during November. Heavy rainfall resulted in a number of localised leaks primarily associated with Neptune Court roof mastic seals. Previous repaired leaks have held up well and further repairs will be carried out in 2021-22.

We have made savings of some £46k from closed down plant during lockdown and £350k from business rates relief over the year.

We have received two awards, the London in Bloom Gold and Green Flag Awards, for NMM grounds. Two lime trees in the north NMM grounds fell in strong winds, fortunately without causing any damage. The Borough Tree Officers attended site and a subsequent survey reassured that this was more coincidence than a systemic problem and it is unlikely to be an issue with remaining trees.

Sentence redacted in accordance with Freedom of Information Act 2000 Section 31(1)(a) the prevention or detection of crime. The DCMS Emergency funding will allow repairs to the ROG South Building roof and associated improvements to air conditioning as well as replacement of the water mains from Blackheath Gate in the Royal Park, both scheduled for January to March 2021. Preliminary works by National Grid are now underway at Kidbrooke.

There were no questions arising and Trustees 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 telling Trustees about some important new acquisitions: a collection of Inuit sculptures, a portrait of Captain Philip Beaver and the Nimrod Expedition sledge, acquired with support from the National Heritage Memorial Fund. Next an overview of online events from Black History Month 365 was provided, highlighting the discussions with Stella Dadzie on 'Women, Slavery and Resistance' and with Professor Hakim Adi on 'Mutiny at Sea: Enslaved African resistance on board'. The Presenter Network goes from strength to strength with 7000 participants signed up. In September we took part again in the Heritage Open Day at PPMCC with virtual events and video tours.

Prior to the second national lockdown on 5 November, we managed to open the Insight Investment Astronomy Photographer of the Year exhibition and 'Exposure: Lives at Sea' is also now ready for when we re-open early December.

The banners created by the BLKBRD Collective are on display outside the Museum and inside the Sammy Ofer Wing foyer and have been extremely well received by our visitors, staff and from schools involved in the project. We have also been busy developing ideas for our content strategy for the ROG and looking at how we can increase capacity for schools.

Trustees were very interested in the proposals for the ROG and asked for further details in the plans. The Director, Collections and Public Engagement stressed that we will not be looking at new buildings but perhaps temporary structures to accommodate school lunches. The Director added that we were having initial discussions with the architects who worked on the redevelopment of the ROG in 2007 and the background they are able to provide to the work done in that period is proving invaluable.

There were no further questions and Trustees thanked the Director, Collections and Public Engagement for her presentation.

8. Development, Marketing and Events Update

The Director, Development presented a case study demonstrating the importance of stewardship, vision and philanthropy, starting from Membership, moving on to the Patrons programme and culminating in a significant donation to 'Exposure: Lives at Sea'. We are finding that the small exhibitions are more nimble and are easier to attract funding. This year stewardship has been more important than ever and we have achieved 96% retention since March 2020 making us a leader in the Arts and Heritage fundraising sector, with other London museums reporting reductions of up to 33% of their members. Half term membership sales were very good with the assistance of a recruitment firm. Whilst in the first lockdown we offered a four month extension to memberships, we are no longer doing so for the second lockdown as our online offer has improved significantly over recent months.

Trustees asked whether we could consider an online only membership for those unable to visit in person and were informed that this is something we are starting to investigate, particularly for some of our astronomy content.

The Director, Development finished her presentation with an overview of marketing initiatives over the period, targeting local family visitors, with radio and social media campaigns proving particularly effective.

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 we were currently forecasting an end of year deficit of approximately £0.4m. This is lower than previous forecasts, largely due to cost savings, particularly with regards to staffing as we had not recruited seasonal staff over the summer months and it was likely there would be no general no pay award this year. Further progress towards break-even was possible, given further restraint on spend and extension of the furlough scheme. Looking ahead to future years, we are committed to achieving a balanced budget by the February 2021 Board. The Comprehensive Spending Review, scheduled for announcement on Wednesday 25 November, is

likely to confirm a flat cash GiA award with further discussions on a potential supplementary Covid award. Detailed work is currently underway, and at this stage the scale of deficit for 2021-22 is suggested to be in the region of £3m, assuming substantial savings. In terms of visitor numbers, we are taking a more cautious approach in our forecasts as we anticipate the path to recovery may be longer than originally expected. We need to evaluate our approach to marketing more carefully, with a more nimble approach to offers and incentives for visitors.

Our backstop last resort position would be to make significant cuts to our programmes and activities, but we are currently looking at a cross organisation drive to find more cost-effective ways of working. In particular, we are looking at selective closure; energy efficiency; smaller exhibitions; closer alignment of activity and funding; simpler, cheaper support systems; resizing operation to match likely level of visitors; and cost effective marketing through self-promotion; press; digital channels.

Trustees agreed that whilst the situation is not comfortable, the efforts staff were making to maximise efficiency were to be applauded. There were no further questions, and the Trustees **noted** the report and thanked the Director, Finance & IT for his presentation.

10. **Audit Committee to Board Report**

The Chair of the Audit Committee informed the Board that unusually, due to delays brought about by the pandemic, the Audit Committee had met that morning, immediately prior to the Board meeting, to approve the 2019-20 Annual Report and Accounts. The external auditors had issued an unqualified audit opinion and they were now comfortable, with the additional funding from Government, around Going Concern. They had noted that the NMME auditors had not been able to attend a stock-take and therefore had been unable to vouch for the physical existence of stock valued at £333k but despite this, they expected the Committee to agree that there should not be an adjustment. The Chair of the Audit Committee informed the Board that the Committee members had expressed their concern at the increase in the NAO fees this year and concluded by saying that the Committee asked the management team to look at making the Annual Report more concise next year.

There were no questions from the Board and Trustees **noted** the Audit Committee report.

11. **Director's Report**

The Director started by saying that our plan is to 'build back better' and we have been working hard over recent months to change the way we work, with the Senior Management Team taking on a more 'hands on' approach and the Executive team more of a mentoring role. We are currently considering closing the Museum on Mondays and Tuesdays (outside school holidays) until the end of March 2021 which would deliver a saving of around £100k. We are also giving serious consideration to the feasibility of 'Sunken Treasures' as the costs of staging this exhibition are estimated to be £1.2m, with potential ticket returns of around £400k, so without sponsorship we will not be able to proceed.

Trustees questioned the rationale behind the proposal to close the Museum sites on Mondays and Tuesdays and expressed concern that this may attract complaints. The Director responded that whilst the cost savings in doing this would not be massive, we had seen over the last few months that visitation on these days has been extremely low. We do not anticipate complaints as, in these challenging times, visitors were now used to checking opening times and booking tickets online. After some debate Trustees' concerns were addressed and the Board **approved** the proposal to close on Mondays and Tuesdays until the end of March 2021, should the Executive decide to proceed on this basis. Any proposal to extend this period of closure would be brought back to the Board.

Trustees asked if there might be any negative diplomatic consequences, should we have to cancel 'Sunken Treasures'. The Director replied that it would indeed require careful handling and we are actively pursuing sponsorship opportunities to avert this eventuality.

Trustees were keen to understand more of the Director's plans to reform the work and remit of the various committees, in particular the Cutty Sark Advisory Committee. The Director stated that he was keen for the CSAC to continue to focus their attention on the long term survivability of the ship and he intended to discuss this further with members of the Committee.

There were no further questions and the Trustees **noted** the Director's report.

12. National Historic Ships-UK Annual Report 2019-20

The Director, National Historic Ships-UK joined the meeting to provide a summary of the team's activities over the last year. The Annual Report had been sent to Trustees that week. Trustees were reminded of the remit of the NHS-UK, who receive an annual grant from DCMS, to provide independent advice on historic vessels to a number of organisations including DCMS and the HLF and to provide leadership across the UK historic ships communities. At the heart of the organisation is maintenance of the National Registers which now total 2,199 vessels, with 36 craft added this year. NHS-UK are regularly consulted for funding applications and the conservation approach on a number of projects. *New Funding Guidelines* were published in January 2020 to provide advice on vessel-related grant applications.

2020 saw the tenth anniversary of the Shipshape Network and the focus this year was on widening outreach, now supporting over 80 maritime projects, promoting activity via the newsletter, social media and online community groups. The distance learning Historic Vessel Conservation Course attracted five new students this year, bringing the total to 15. The Shipshape Heritage Training Partnership Project, grant aided by the Heritage Fund, successfully met its diversity targets in the recruitment of eight trainees aged 18-30, including five women. At the end of the first 12-month placements, six trainees went on to find employment within the maritime sector. Placements this year have been delayed due to Covid-19 but are now underway.

The 2020 NHS-UK awards ceremony went ahead with Flagships appointed for their tenacity in responding to the crisis and their plans for online engagement. The Director, NHS-UK concluded by saying that it had been a productive year despite the challenges brought by the pandemic.

Trustees thanked the Director, National Historic Ships-UK for her informative presentation.

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

Trustees asked whether we had received any response from the 'Common Sense Group' of MPs following the Director's reply to their letter last month. The Director confirmed that he had not received a response but that he had written to our Members and Patrons explaining the Museum's position.

There were no further matters raised and the meeting concluded.

Minutes certified by Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope, Chair

1 March 2021