

THE TRUSTEES OF THE NATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM

THREE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY FIRST MEETING

10:00 THURSDAY 25 FEBRUARY 2021

HELD REMOTELY BY VIDEO CONFERENCE DUE TO COVID-19 EPIDEMIC

MINUTES

Trustees present:

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

In attendance:

Paddy Rodgers	Director, Royal Museums Greenwich
Andy Bodle	Director, Operations and HR
Kate Seeckts	Director, Development & Communications
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~

- i. Update on the appointment of Trustees and Chair
Trustees were advised that the role description had been sent to the Public Appointments team who had come back with a few revisions which we were working through with the Nominations Committee Chair (JB). We had also updated the list of potential candidates following feedback from the Board and would be submitting this shortly to DCMS.

~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 370 of 19 November 2020 and of the extraordinary meeting held on 4 February 2021**
The Board **agreed** the minutes to be a true record of the meetings. The Chair of the Board certified the minutes electronically after the meeting.

4. **Finance Report 2020/21 and Future Business Plan**

The Director, Finance & IT presented an overview of the Museum's financial position as we approach the end of the financial year and referred the Board to his more detailed paper circulated prior to the meeting. The forecast outturn for 2020/21 is breakeven after drawdown from the additional DCMS Covid funding. The position for the following three years remains challenging, with visitor numbers not recovering for several years, particularly to the ROG which attracted a high percentage of foreign visitors. The Director, Finance & IT said that projecting visitor numbers at paying sites was extremely speculative and ambitious assumptions had been made, resulting in a projected deficit of £2.4m in 2021/22. However, the level of risk was high and the range of outcomes included scenarios where the deficit was significantly higher. We have worked hard to reduce our variable costs and the remaining costs are fairly fixed, with staff costs amounting to c. £15m with c. £5m for contracted costs.

Our options to close the deficit include the continuation of DCMS Covid support, the details of which will not become apparent until sometime after the budget on 3 March; a reduction in our pay bill resulting from a redundancy programme; further cuts in non-staff spending, but the impact of this now is thought to be minimal as we have already pared back in many areas. Failing the above, the default option would be to draw down on our unrestricted operating reserves which amount to c £3m.

Trustees were keen to know if we had considered doing things differently in order to save money. The Director and Director of Finance & IT agreed that a nimble mindset was being encouraged and much has been achieved in this regard already, but the principal difficulty remains with our relatively high fixed costs. The Board and Directors agreed that a separate meeting should be convened with Trustees on 15 March by which time we should have heard the outcome of the Covid support package.

5. **Director's Report: Strategic Plan for next five year cycle: 'Reach & Reputation'**

The Director had circulated a paper prior to the Board prior to this meeting setting out the Executive team's skeleton strategic plan for the next five years. Our ambition is to work coherently and efficiently with the aim of building our reach and reputation, locally, regionally, nationally and globally. We will focus on three main developments: ROG 350; 'Our Ocean Our Planet'; The Virtual Museum.

With ROG 350 we want to improve visitor flow, with one single admissions area. The project shall comprise of discrete work packages which can be executed as funding becomes available but without necessitating closures of the entire site. The aim is to complete this work largely by 2025/26 but the principle is more one of constant renovation to stay relevant, rather than a specific line in the sand.

Our 'Ocean our Planet' seeks to tie the galleries of the NMM to a large-scale ocean exhibit or moment on the Great Map, Neptune Court, building a year-round programme culminating in World Oceans Day. The focus would be educative and explorative, attracting a younger audience and would require collaboration with external partners.

The Virtual Museum – we are at the start of this journey, but our clean sheet could be used to our advantage as we are not tied to any partners or specific

roadmap. We are not aiming for the virtual visit to replace a physical visit, but it should allow quality engagement and co-curation of some areas of the collection.

We are also aiming to have plans for each of our sites **in order to maximise the potential of each:**

The Queen's House – Art and Architecture making it a beautiful place to see beautiful things. The programme is already underway with the Woburn Collection and the intention is to have a series of house guests by borrowing and exhibiting works of art that illuminate and interact with the collection, a new book will be commissioned and networks of art lovers and architects are already being nurtured.

ROG – Universal appeal awe and wonder to sit alongside expertise and detail to widen appeal, to ask the big questions, what is the Universe? how did it form? what/where is my place within it? to explore GMT - running an empire on time, and subsequent globalisation and relevance to people today.

Cutty Sark – International trade, NHS and local history/heritage harbours seeing the ship as more than an object, as a skills and knowledge base, a landmark for local history and a story for the great river port that has all but disappeared. As a relatively new part of the RMG collection, in-house expertise is limited but there are plenty of collaborative opportunities.

NMM – Ocean, People, Vessels 'Ocean' will open the way to understanding vessels and life at sea. People, has two main areas for development, the first, the reactivation of our assets on the Understanding Slavery Initiative with a widening of our response to the BLM movement; the second, Quintin Colville's proposed book on understanding how the Royal and Merchant Navies connected the world, helped globalise trade and so shaped modern British society.

Brass Foundry/Kidbrooke/Caird library the main focus must be in improving access to the photographic, ship plans and manuscript collections. The current pace of digitisation is so slow that the collection will never be available to the public in anything close to its entirety. We are currently investigating the feasibility of digitising the historic photographs collection through an external agent to make it publicly available for mass curation. If this trial works it can be used as a prototype to raise funds for the rest of the Archive.

In terms of programming, we are re-evaluating the future use of the SEG after Tudors to Windsors as large blockbuster exhibitions have a huge carbon footprint. We have decided that we cannot proceed with the proposed 'Maritime Silk Road' exhibition in 2022 although work done to date shall not be wasted but re-purposed. Our focus shall turn to smaller projects which are less costly but at the same time easier to fundraise against.

Trustees thanked the Director for his presentation and were very supportive of the proposed strategic direction outlined by him. They were pleased to hear of the aims for constant renewal and the emphasis on the digital with the involvement of the public was welcomed. The importance of fundraising was underlined and the fact that university outreach was likely to increase in the future was cited as an area to tap into.

6. Update on plans for re-opening and programming for 2021

The Director, Collections and Public Engagement started her presentation by introducing the aims for the ROG, making it a place to 'lose yourself in time and space' unifying these topics across the whole site, with enhanced story-telling and a playful approach to create an unforgettable visitor experience. The next stage of development is to map the vision and the narrative to the architecture and site,

aiming to have a coherent visitor flow. Some work has already begun to facilitate future work.

Turning next to Programming the Director, Development and Communications said that we were learning lessons from previous large exhibitions in the SEG. Whilst our exhibitions achieved good reviews we were not really getting the visitor numbers to attract large sponsors. We are now planning a more iterative approach, testing ideas with audiences before committing ourselves to large scale costs, introducing a freeze period whilst funding is secured.

In order to inform our stakeholders, including staff, of our programme and exhibition activity, between 40-50 digital postcards have been produced providing key information about each project in a very immediate and accessible way.

Lastly, an overview of our opening programme for mid-May was provided for Trustees.

Trustees were keen to explore other opportunities for using the SEG if it is not to be used on the short to medium term for large scale exhibitions and several ideas were put forward. Amongst these was the suggestion that the use of a large screen to project images or films could be a relatively low cost way of using the space creatively. After a short discussion there were no further questions and Trustees thanked both the Director of Collections and Public Engagement and the Director, Development and Communications for their updates.

7. Collection Disposals

Two categories of items were presented to Trustees for potential disposal. These were:

- Items from the Sutton Hoo holdings of the archaeology collection, on the basis that these no longer fit with the Museum's Collections Policy and would be more appropriately split between three potential recipients: The British Museum, The National Trust and the Sutton Hoo Ship's Company;
- Items formerly held by the Cutty Sark Trust which are subject to a specific procedure approved at May 2017 Collections Development Committee.

Trustees approved the disposal of both categories of disposals and all items detailed as per the recommendations provided in the supporting paper.

8. Trustee Diary

Due to the ongoing health crisis, various changes are being made to the diary and we are also now making arrangements for the 2022 meetings. A revised diary shall be issued as soon as it is ready.

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

There were no issues arising from Volume B.

The Director informed the Board that discussions regarding the future of the ORNC were ongoing and that it had been decided that both parties should contribute some funds towards a study to investigate available options. A working group comprising two Trustees from each of the parties would be convened. Eric Reynolds had already kindly agreed to assist so the Director asked Trustees to contact him after the meeting should they be interested in participating.

There were no further matters raised and the meeting concluded.

Minutes certified by Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope, Chair

6 May 2021