

THE TRUSTEES OF THE NATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM

**THREE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY THIRD MEETING
09:30 THURSDAY 8 JULY 2021
HELD IN THE BOARDROOM**

MINUTES

Trustees present:

Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope Chair
Joyce Bridges
Dr Fiona Butcher
Dr Helen Czerski
Alastair Marsh
Eric Reynolds

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

~Board Matters~

i. Update on the appointment of Trustees and Chair

Trustees were advised that no further progress had been made as the DCMS Public Appointments team were still finalising the Assessment Panel. We have however received informal permission that the tenure of Joyce Bridges and Eric Reynolds may be extended for six months. Both Joyce and Eric have agreed to continue for which the Board and Directors expressed their gratitude. We await formal confirmation of this from the Department. Trustees expressed their concern at the continuing delays to the appointment of new Trustees and asked that a letter expressing this concern is drafted from the Chair to the Permanent Secretary.

Post meeting note: We were informed by DCMS that the campaign had launched on 13 July.

~Governance Session~

1. Apologies

Apologies received from Professor Julian Dowdeswell and Jeremy Penn.

2. Declaration of relevant interests related to this meeting

None other than those previously registered.

3. Draft Minutes of Board meeting 372 of 6 May 2021

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

4. Re-opening update

The Head of Commerce and Visitor Experience reminded Trustees that we re-opened our grounds, shops, cafes and the Library on 12 April. The full re-opening all our sites took place on 17 May. Re-opening went smoothly and staff were keen to be back at work. Weekday attendance against capacity is still disappointing at 39%; weekends better at 82%; half-term was more promising at 87% of capacity. 82% of visitors are booking online; 8% by phone and 10% walk-ups. Ten per cent of current visitors are members and about three per cent are trade. Retail is performing well with spending at £1.89 vs £1.11 previously. Catering is also doing comparatively well. Discounted entry for Mondays and Tuesdays is being trialled until the school holidays and has been relatively successful.

Trustees asked about our approach to mask wearing and the Director said that we would politely recommend mask wearing but not enforce it. Infection rates are increasing and several members of our staff are currently self-isolating so it will be a challenging few weeks. Trustees asked about testing and were advised that test kits were readily available from HR and staff are being advised to test twice weekly. Temperature taking at entry was not generally recommended as not necessarily accurate. Trustees agreed that we should act in accordance with other museums and heritage organisations in our approach to safety measures. There were no further questions and the Trustees thanked the Head of Commerce and Visitor Experience for her presentation.

5. HR update

A paper detailing the outcomes of the Voluntary Redundancy process had been sent to Trustees in advance of the meeting.

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

The Head of HR then updated Trustees on our intention to recruit a Sustainability Manager, the role description for which had been included in the pre Board papers. Until now sustainability matters have been handled in an ad hoc way by enthusiastic members of staff as an adjunct to their main role. If we are to commit to this and make a real impact as part of 'Charting Our Course' we need a professional and qualified person with sufficient seniority to make the necessary changes. Trustees asked whether the qualifications sought are readily available and whether we can be confident we will recoup the costs of the post. It was also noted that the brief was considerable and perhaps additional support would be required. The Head of HR said that the qualifications were becoming more commonplace as positions such as this were increasing. Our aim is that in

time the savings made will match or exceed the salary costs of the post. The postholder will report directly to the Director and work closely with the Executive and Senior Management Team.

Trustees were keen to understand what was being done about bringing staff back to the workplace after the easing of Covid-19 restrictions on 19 July. The Head of HR stated that 'hybrid working guidelines' had been issued, encouraging staff to return to the workplace at least two or three days per week in liaison with line management, and depending on operational requirements. Feedback to this approach has been positive to date and we shall be reviewing regularly to ensure productivity is not adversely impacted and that there is no perceived unfairness amongst different teams.

6. Finance Director's Report

6.1 Finance Report 2020-21 including Annual Report and Accounts

The Director, Finance & IT stated that the process of auditing our Annual Report & Accounts had gone much more smoothly this year than last and that the Auditors of both NMM and NMME were content that the 'going concern' basis remains appropriate for both entities. The Annual Report and Accounts were reviewed and approved by Audit Committee at their meeting on 28 June 2021 and were being signed imminently. The overall impact of the periods of closure and consequent loss of visitors and income generating opportunities, resulted in a reduction in net self-generated income from £10.4m to £0.3m. This was offset by substantial additional public sector funding comprising c.£2m emergency Grant in Aid; £3m Job Retention scheme support for furloughed staff and £0.5m support from Royal Borough of Greenwich via rates relief and restart grants. The balance of £4.5m in shortfall has been largely funded by cost savings. Overall, the impact has been a modest operating deficit on Revenue Funds, and this is reflected in the level of General Operating Reserves which fell from £3.1m at March 2020 to £3.0m at March 2021. On Capital, the Development Fund - which had been substantially reduced during the Endeavour programme to provide cashflow support - is being rebuilt in anticipation of the ROG project.

6.2 Finance Report 2021-22

The Director, Finance & IT 2021/22 reminded the Board that the budget deficit of £2.4m as at the March Board has been reduced to £1.9m following the redundancy programme but before the additional DCMS Covid underwrite of up to £3.6m

After the first three months of trading there is a slight net improvement to £1.7m deficit in full year forecast as at 30 June 2021, reflecting cost savings in operational areas with a £0.5m contingency remaining. However, due to the continuing uncertainty regarding our ability to attract visitors in light of increasing infection rates we have to be cautious about the outlook but we do also need to invest to attract more visitors and repeat visitation.

Trustees agreed that an agile approach will be required in the coming months. Trustees requested a copy of the Finance Report for 2021/22 and thanked the Director, Finance & IT for his update.

7. Audit Committee Report to Board

The Chair of the Audit Committee reported that there had been a good meeting of the Audit Committee on 28 June and that the year-end audit had gone a lot more smoothly than last year, in particular relating to concerns about the impact of Covid-19 on 'going concern'. There had been a brief 'in camera' session between the Committee members and the auditors and nothing of concern arose. The Committee had noted that the quality of the Annual Report and Accounts was extremely high this year giving a clear insight into the work of the Museum. The Committee had scrutinised the Internal Audit Plan for the coming year in some detail as there is a move towards more advisory work against the usual assurance work but after discussion the Committee had felt that the balance was about right and would monitor progress at the next meeting. The Governance Assurance Letter was circulated to Trustees and it was noted that the Audit Committee were being asked to provide assurances to DCMS on a wider remit than previously.

The Chair of the Audit Committee thanked the Trustees who serve on the Audit Committee for their contribution and time given over the last very challenging year. This thanks was endorsed and seconded by the Chair of Trustees. There were no additional questions and the Board duly **noted** the Audit Committee to Board report.

8. Director's Report

The Director advised Trustees that in response to the Secretary of State's letter regarding various national events in 2022 we would be replying shortly with a plan to pursue several projects which could be linked to the Queen's Jubilee. It was suggested that we might investigate opportunities to work with the ORNC for some kind of event on the river.

The Director's report provided updates for Trustees on the progress of delivering our strategic aims and detailed which member of the Executive is leading on each strand. The Director of Collections and Public Engagement ran through our exhibitions plans for the next three years.

Trustees were pleased with progress to date but some concern was expressed that there appears to be little focus on our online strategy. The Director agreed that whilst we had made great strides with our online programming over the last year, we need to work harder at understanding how the virtual can complement the physical offer so that we encourage more people to visit.

The Board were interested in the Canaletto exhibition proposal but it was noted that, whilst a good idea, if we wished to link it with the environmental issues Venice experiences, it would take a lot of research and liaison with other organisations to make it work.

Trustees questioned the apparent departure from the RMG branding as it had taken some time and effort to achieve cohesion across the various sites. The Director agreed that the RMG branding is still very important and shall continue to be used particularly when marketing to the travel trade, but whilst our local

and repeat visitor remains our focus, it makes sense to differentiate the various sites and their diverse offers to encourage people to visit more than once.

Trustees working as part of the 'Quad', the working group looking at ways of enhanced co-operation between RMG and ORNC, reported good progress and a consensus of opinion from both parties. A further update will be provided to the Board at the next meeting.

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

9. DCMS Framework Agreement

Trustees were advised that discussions were ongoing with DCMS and that in common with our peers we had raised the need to revisit the Key Performance Indicators, not solely in response to Covid but also in the long term as they no longer reflect current priorities.

A further update will be provided at the next Board meeting.

10. Induction Plan for new Trustees

An outline induction plan had been circulated to Trustees prior to the meeting following discussion at the last Board meeting. More detail will be added once we know who the new Trustees are, their experience, interests and start dates. Trustees had no further suggestions and the outline plan was duly **approved**.

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

There were no matters arising from Volume B. The Director invited Robert Blyth, Senior Curator of World and Maritime History, to provide Trustees with some background on a painting we are hoping to purchase by artist Tilly Kettle, '*An admiral in his cabin, issuing his orders*'. The Acquisitions Committee has approved the purchase in principle but we are hoping for some additional funding from the Society of Nautical Research and from the Art Fund. Acquiring this painting for the Museum would enable us to tell a broader variety of stories about the activities and personnel involved in naval command during the eighteenth century, about the aspirations of those individuals, and about the role of art in commemorating professional success and social mobility. Trustees agreed that the painting would be an important and useful addition to our collection and were favourable to us continuing to pursue its purchase, subject to the funding constraints.

There were no further matters raised and the meeting concluded.

Minutes certified by Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope, Chair

16.09.2021