

THE TRUSTEES OF THE NATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM

THREE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY SIXTH MEETING

10:00 THURSDAY 24 FEBRUARY 2022

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

**In attendance:**

Paddy Rodgers

CEO, Royal Museums Greenwich

Gail Symington

Executive Creative Director

Chris Walker

Executive Business & Operations Director

Lucy Cooke

Head of Development

Charlotte Cowan

Head of People & Culture

Karen Eden-Tuxford

Head of Commerce & Visitor Experience

Jane Costantini

Governance and Museum Records Manager

*~Board Matters~*

- i. The Chairman noted that this was the last official meeting for Joyce Bridges and Eric Reynolds as Trustees. A lunch in their honour was being held following the Board meeting where the Chair would pay tribute to their service to RMG.
- ii. Update on the appointment of Trustees and Chair  
The Director reminded Trustees that following the interviews for new Trustees which took place in November 2021, we had been advised that seven suitable candidates had been put forward for approval to the Prime Minister's office. Recommendations for the reappointments of Fiona Butcher, Helen Czerski and Julian Dowdeswell were submitted a year ahead of end of tenure by RMG to DMCS in August 2021.

*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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*~Governance Session~*

1. **Apologies**  
Apologies received from Alastair Marsh.
2. **Declaration of relevant interests related to this meeting**  
None were raised at the start of the meeting other than those previously registered. However, in the course of discussion under item 5, Mr Reynolds declared an interest in a Thames energy project.
3. **Draft Minutes of Board meeting 375 of 18 November 2021**  
The Board **agreed** the minutes to be a true record of the meeting. The Chair of the Board certified the minutes accordingly.
4. **Director's Report**  
The Director's full report had been circulated to the Board prior to the meeting. The Director summarised the key points for Trustees starting with an update on the financial situation. GiA has been confirmed for one year only, and includes an inflationary increase of 2%. The outcome of our application for Capital funds should be confirmed before the new financial year. We have made a case for a new roof for Neptune Court. The Director reported that we are still awaiting news on the Framework Agreement with DCMS.

In terms of visitor numbers, since writing the report, the events in Ukraine this week are likely to have a detrimental impact on tourism. The Director then set out the various mechanisms we have put in place to monitor progress of our developing plan, in particular how we envisage that the new Activity Trackers will provide transparency, coherence and continuity, as well as a repository for past projects. Our internal auditors, BDO, are working closely with us on this.

Trustees were interested to see the sample Activity Tracker and it was suggested that we might add a line to the tracker assessing how each project furthers EDI aims (Equality, Diversity, Inclusion). Trustees were keen also that the cards should be actively scrutinised to ensure that they do not become merely a 'box ticking'

exercise. The Director acknowledged this risk and explained that the Operational Delivery Group would be responsible for actioning the projects and the Strategy Delivery Group would be providing the overview of all activities and ensuring they fit with our aims and values. He went on to articulate that we must embrace the three modes of a museum: the traditional view of our founders that the collections and curatorial expertise were what made a museum; the more commercial view of museums that took hold from the 1990s; and the more recent vision for museums to be receptive to engage with our communities and provide a multi perspective social history. In order for us to succeed in the future we should be reconciling all three of these modes and it will be important for our colleagues to understand the importance of each of these, so that the work of all teams has equal value.

Trustees were supportive of the Director's vision and thanked him for his report.

## 5. Finance Report

The Executive Business & Operations Director updated the Board on the expected outturn for 2021-22, which is currently forecast as a deficit of £0.9m before drawdown of DCMS Covid support.

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The Board **approved** the resolution to apply any surplus on unrestricted revenue reserves for the year ended 31 March 2022 arising from Museum activities wholly to the making of a grant to RMG Foundation.

The Executive Business & Operations Director went on to provide an overview of the 2022-3 to 2024-5 draft financial plan. The current expectation is that in 2022-23 we shall face a £3.2m revenue budget deficit, falling to £1.3m in 2024-25.

Factors to consider in the coming year, are:

- The return of international visitors may only be gradual, and domestic visitors may favour the free sites;
- increased staff costs (as furlough support ends, vacancies are filled, modest pay increases made and our longstanding commitment to paying LLW is honoured);
- inflationary pressures, with utility costs likely to increase by around 25%;
- investment in a moderate activity plan as we cannot expect visitors to return without a new and interesting offer.

Trustees expressed concern at the scale of the deficit and potential risk to reserves. They were informed that to offset these factors there are a number of different levers: we may receive some additional Covid support from

Government; visitor numbers may increase quicker than we anticipate and we can monitor and moderate our programme costs.

The Board agreed with the Directors' view that rebuilding our visitor numbers required investment in programming and in the ROG 350 project in particular and that it may be necessary to draw on historic reserves to achieve this as necessary. Drawdown of the 21-22 Covid support would enable this to happen whilst maintaining an acceptable level of overall reserves.

Trustees also asked if there was potential to do more on investing in renewable energy sources. Trustees were informed that we were hopeful that we would shortly have a Sustainability Manager in post who will be required to produce an energy plan for the Museum.

Eric Reynolds stated that he was involved in a project to draw energy from the Thames and he declared an interest in this. It was **agreed** that a meeting should be convened to discuss this further.

Discussion on the 2022-3 to 2024-5 budget was concluded by Trustees asking the Directors to keep them informed if anything material alters the position between now and the next Board and to present the final budget at the April meeting.

## 6. Visitor update

The Head of Commerce and Visitor Experience informed Trustees that we welcomed over 268,500 visitors in November to January across the sites with an admissions income of over £450,000. 52% of our visitors continue to book online but we are seeing more walk-up 47% with phone bookings at 1%. In terms of ticketing the audience split was 70% adult 6% student 24% child. Core visitors represented 92% of visits with Members making up 6% and Travel Trade 2%.

Trustees were reminded that the ROG has been closed since early January for work to the Great Equatorial Telescope and to the Octagon Room.

The Ice-Rink operated throughout December and closed on 9 January attracting over 60,000 skaters and Lunar New Year was celebrated on 29 January with almost 11,000 visitors. Retail generated sales of £229,000, 11% above forecast and the Online shop generated sales of £85,000 which was 8% below forecast but against a background of significantly increased sales compared with pre-pandemic levels. Catering income was £230,000 for the period.

Year to date we have welcomed over 700,000 visitors across the sites, generated admissions income of over £2 million, over £770,000 retail income, £165,350 in online shop sales and catering income of over £770,000.

According to statistics published by ACE Association for Cultural Enterprises our Spend per visitor at the Meridian shop is comparing favourably, whilst our Cutty Sark shop is a little below the average for paid venues, so we are looking at ways to address this.

Trustees were informed that the new uniform for the Front of House team will be introduced from early March. It is less formal in style than the current uniform and is made from sustainable materials and staff have been closely involved with the design process. Canaletto's Venice Revisited opens at the NMM on 1 April and the ROG North site will reopen early April.

The presentation concluded with a selection of visitor comments and Trustees thanked the Head of Commerce and Visitor Experience for her update.

## 7. HR update

A paper providing the background on the payment of London Living Wage to our lowest paid colleagues had been sent to Trustees in advance of the meeting. The recommendation from the Head of People & Culture and the Directors is that we should implement LLW from 1 April 2022.

Trustees noted that the cost of living increases will soon take effect and there was concern at our high staff turnover rates. Moreover, Trustees recalled that they had made a commitment to pay LLW and therefore this commitment must be honoured.

The Board **agreed** to the implementation of LLW from 1 April 2022 and also to a 1% pay increase for all other staff but felt the latter needed to be kept under review.

## 8. ROG Project Update

The Executive Business & Operations Director informed Trustees that we are about to appoint the architect for the project. We have also recently concluded interviews to appoint a project manager as our long standing internal Project Manager, Sue Kennedy, will shortly be retiring from the Museum. A clear governance structure for the management of the project has been established. Trustees were informed that the project will permeate across many of our current activities and that digital technology will be fundamental to the project.

Next, the Executive Creative Director went on to explain how various creative workshops are currently taking place with both internal and external stakeholders to challenge our current thinking and already some interesting ideas were emerging. A review of our existing programme for schools and the public has been commissioned and will be carried out by a Senior Research Fellow at UCL Institute of Education. We are also nearing an agreed contract with artist Katie Paterson for a work which will have a long-lasting impact and will be something with which the learning teams can engage.

Trustees asked for more information on the ROG site plans and the Directors **agreed** to distribute a pack with further details to Trustees shortly.

## 9. Development Update

The Head of Development had set out in her paper the first stages of the fundraising campaign for ROG 350 with our first key events on 24 March and 19 May 2022. Trustees were invited to contribute any further suggestions. The Donations and Sponsorship Policy had undergone some small update recently which Trustees were asked to approve and the Policy which was duly **agreed**.

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10. **ORNC/RMG collaboration**

The Chair asked the two Trustees, Eric Reynolds and Fiona Butcher, involved in the Consultative Group, 'The Quad', to summarise the current position and the proposal for future collaboration. Trustees were informed that the first of two priorities identified was the establishment of a Master Services Agreement to facilitate the mutual provision of services. The second priority is to attempt to proceed with the opening up of the Grand Axis by creating a pedestrian crossing in front of the Museum's Royal Gates leading directly into the centre of the ORNC campus.

The Board wholeheartedly **endorsed** the plan to re-open the Grand Axis and requested Mr Reynolds to make the necessary planning enquiries on our behalf.

Regarding the wider proposals, the Director stated that once we have the Sustainability Manager in post they will be tasked with assessing opportunities to create efficiencies between the two organisations and there may be ways we can assist them with Collections Management rather than them investing in their own systems.

The Board thanked Eric Reynolds and Fiona Butcher for their service on 'The Quad' and their willingness to continue involvement as outlined in the proposal. Trustees also **requested** that the ORNC Trustees should be invited to lunch at RMG for the July meeting. The Director will draft a response to Dr Rupert Evenett's letter on behalf of the Chair.

11. **GDPR Update**

The Governance & Museum Records Manager informed Trustees that this update report had been requested by the Audit Committee at its November 2021 meeting. The report provided a summary of ongoing work to ensure compliance and a brief overview of the impact of GDPR at RMG.

There were no questions from the Board in relation to this update and the report was duly **noted**.

12. **Matters arising from the information in Volume B/AOB**

Trustees commented on the volume and variety of work documented in Item 13. the Q3 Cross Museum Activities Report.

There were no further matters raised and the meeting concluded.