

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Minutes of meeting held on Friday 5 February 2016

Cultra Manor, Training Suite

Trustees Present:

Mr Miceal McCoy - Chairman
Dr Rosemary Kelly - Vice-Chairman
Professor Michael Catto
Professor Garth Earls
Professor Karen Fleming
Mrs Hazel Francey
Dr Leon Litvack
Mr Alan McFarland
Dr George Mcllroy
Mrs Catherine Molloy
Mrs Annette Moor
Mr Joseph Rice
Dr Margaret Ward

In Attendance:

Mrs Jude Helliker - (Acting Chief Executive)
Mr Paddy Gilmore - (Director of Learning & Partnership)
Ms Sinead McCartan - (Acting Director of Collections & Interpretation)
Mrs Gillian McLean - (Director of Marketing, Communications & Trading)
Mr Paul Sheridan - (Acting Director of Finance)
Ms Pamela Baird - (Head of Strategic Research & Planning)
Miss Eileen Boyle - (Business Support Assistant)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Mrs Daphne Harshaw.

2. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The Chairman asked members to report any conflicts of interest in relation to the business to be discussed. There were no conflicts of interest raised.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 11 DECEMBER 2015

Trustees approved the minutes of the above meeting of the Board.

Proposed by: Mrs Hazel Francey
Seconded by: Dr George Mcllroy

4. MATTERS ARISING

Item 6 Physical Verification of Collections

Staffing capacity in relation to the above is to be addressed by a staffing plan aligned to the VE Scheme which will be brought to the General Purposes and Finance Committee in May.

5. BUSINESS OF CHAIRMAN

The Chairman reminded Trustees that the Permanent Secretary had been due to attend the meeting that day to discuss the implications of the NIEC investigation. Unfortunately he had been unable to attend and this would be rescheduled.

The Chairman thanked Mrs Jude Helliker for her sterling work as Acting Chief Executive. He added that it had been a pleasure working with her during the last two and a half years and highlighted that she had been with National Museums Northern Ireland for over a decade. He wished Mrs Helliker well in her new employment and praised her aptitude and leadership.

5.1 CEO Recruitment

The Chairman advised Trustees that Mrs Kathryn Thomson, the new Chief Executive, would commence employment on 1st March. He updated the Board that the Acting Chief Executive had been having a series of meetings with Mrs Thomson and that she would also be meeting with the other Directors. He advised Trustees that Mrs Thomson would be joining Trustees for lunch after the Board meeting.

5.2 Patrons' Fundraising Events

The Director of Learning & Partnership reviewed progress to date in respect of the above. He circulated a draft copy of the Ulster Museum Patrons' Programme which set out opportunities at three levels. He advised Trustees that this was a slow process and the Patrons' Programme is part of a wider income and fundraising strategy.

In response to questions from Trustees he advised that it is possible to have named galleries.

The relationship between Patrons related activity and the new Strategy for Culture and Arts was raised. As this was a separate agenda item, further discussion was suspended until later in the meeting.

5.3 Business Planning Diary

Dr Rosemary Kelly asked that this document be held until the next meeting. She highlighted that there was much duplication of papers for the meeting that day with those from the General Purposes and Finance Committee meeting held the previous Friday.

5.4 Stakeholder Engagement

The Chairman reminded Trustees that there had been three stakeholder events over recent months, one at each of the museums, which had contributed to repositioning National Museums Northern Ireland for the challenges ahead.

The Chairman advised the Board that it was his intention to meet individually with each of the Trustees over the coming weeks to discuss their expectations in relation to the above.

6. LOANS FOR APPROVAL BY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Acting Chief Executive noted that, on this occasion, there were no loans for submission to the Board.

Dr Rosemary Kelly asked that the loans summary document brought to the General Purposes and Finance Committee meeting on 29 January 2016, be shared with the Board.

7. BUSINESS OF EXECUTIVE

7.1 Business Performance 2015/16

7.1.1 Business Performance RAG Report – Quarter 3 - 2015/16

The Acting Chief Executive reviewed the above report in discussion with Trustees. She noted that all Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were either on or above target and that the only KPI which remained amber was the KPI for Savings Delivery Plans. This KPI remained amber because funding for the VE Scheme in 2016-17 had not been confirmed until the fourth quarter.

The Acting Chief Executive drew Trustees' attention to the last page of the report which summarised the position at the end of the third quarter against the key performance indicators. She highlighted that by the end of the year, visitor numbers are expected to reach 760,000-770,000 which would be 15% ahead of the target of 660,000. Factors which have contributed include: strong event performance; a mild autumn and winter weather which offset the wet summer; 'A Vikings Guide to Deadly Dragons' at the Ulster Museum (with over 20,000 visitors); the contra advertising and promotions secured by MCT; Monday opening during the summer at the Ulster American Folk Park; exhibitions and events including the RUA and Colin Davidson's Silent Testimony exhibition (60,139 visitors); and the learning programmes with almost 70,000 participants year-to-date.

The Acting Chief Executive advised Trustees that moving forward into 2016-17, the Executive Team is looking at a visitor target of 680,000 which would include a contingency of 10% to mitigate for the weather, income, budget cuts, free social inclusion visitors, the timing of Easter, competition and so on.

The Acting Chief Executive highlighted that the following KPIs have already been met or exceeded: number of initiatives targeted in areas of multiple deprivation; number of outreach engagement initiatives; collections engagements in new Urban Village venues; collections with computerised inventory control and collections-related images online.

In response to questions, the Acting Director of Collections & Interpretation elaborated on the current position in relation to collections digitisation and collections online saying that during the fourth quarter, activity would focus on data cleaning and quality assurance.

The Acting Director of Collections & Interpretation also assured Trustees that the collections belonging to the Belfast Naturalist Field Club would be remaining in the care of National Museums Northern Ireland while their paper records archive would be moving to PRONI.

7.1.2 Visitor Performance Report

The Director of Marketing, Communications & Trading reviewed the above report outlining visitor and digital performance for the period ended 31 December 2015.

She updated Trustees on the position to the end of January, highlighting exceptional performance across the museums.

The Director of Learning & Partnership informed Trustees that there would be increased activity during the final quarter and that the KPI for formal and informal learning would be raised to 85,000 for 2016-17.

7.2.1 Management Accounts to 31 November 2015

The Acting Director of Finance reviewed the above report outlining the organisation's financial position for the period ended 31 November 2015, and answered points of clarification pertaining thereto.

The Acting Director of Finance highlighted a number of additional funding streams which had been secured including: £95K for TBUC projects being delivered by the end of March; CEDaR funding of £65K from the NIEA also to be spent in-year; £444k from the Big Lottery for a new Live & Learn 'Accelerating Ideas' programme which will be delivered over the next three years in partnership with Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums and if successful may lead to a National programme.

The Chairman expressed the thanks of the Board to all involved in securing funding from a range of sources.

The Director of Learning & Partnership circulated a short paper on the Live and Learn Pilot Project for which the Big Lottery funding had been secured.

The Board congratulated Mr Paddy Gilmore on securing the funding for an excellent flagship project.

The Acting Chief Executive added her praise to the work undertaken by the Acting Director of Collections & Interpretation and the Director of Learning & Partnership and their teams.

7.2.2 Capital Programme

The Acting Director of Finance reminded Trustees that the organisation commenced the year with £18k for capital projects. In November an additional £882k was secured from June monitoring. He assured Trustees that this budget would be fully spent and that while the January bids had not been successful the organisation still had a series of projects which could be delivered if additional capital became available before year-end.

The Acting Chief Executive advised the Board that she and the Acting Director of Finance had met with the Capital Project Manager from DCAL earlier that week and made her aware of a number of projects which could be delivered.

7.2.3 Savings Delivery Plans – Quarter 2

The Acting Director of Finance reminded Trustees that, due to the Voluntary Exit Scheme not having been initiated in-year, it had been necessary to redraft the Savings Delivery Plans in October. He presented the SDPs for the second quarter and advised Trustees that the organisation was on target

to produce a balanced budget and that at the end of quarter three SDPs of £1.414m had been achieved.

Trustees acknowledged the SDPs achieved and welcomed the positive approach and innovation being delivered in the current climate of savings.

7.3 Planning 2016/17

7.3.1 Budget 2016/17 - Savings Delivery Plans

The Acting Director of Finance drew Trustees' attention to the commissioning letter received from DCAL on 21 December 2015, which set out Department cuts of 5.7%. He outlined for Trustees that this equated to a cut in budget of £923k when inflation and other pressures were included.

The Acting Director of Finance advised Trustees that a similar approach to 2015/16 had been adopted which aimed to protect front line services and programming. He advised Trustees that the requirement from a VE Scheme in 2016/17 was a reduction in the staffing level of circa 27 FTE staff and that it is currently anticipated that the Scheme will launch in April with first exits in August.

The Acting Director of Finance advised Trustees that the SDPs have been submitted to the Department and are currently under review.

The Chairman commended the resilience of the senior management teams in constructing these savings annually.

Dr Leon Litvack arrived at this point in the meeting (11.50am).

The Acting Chief Executive advised Trustees that a positive working relationship with Department officials had been important to mutual understanding of the pressures created by savings delivery plans.

The Chairman highlighted that friendship and collaboration was also important for the new Strategy for Culture and Arts.

7.3.2 Draft Business Plan 2016/17

The Acting Chief Executive reviewed the draft Business Plan 2016/17 and drew Trustees' attention to a number of amends which had been made following feedback at the December Board meeting. In response to feedback from the Board at that meeting, amends had been made to the introduction on page 5 which now included references to the Museums Order and Decade of Centenaries. The Museums Order had been added to the appendices. Also following Board feedback, the priorities on page 6 had been revisited and more positive language had been used. The organisation's mission had been added on page 7, as this is an expectation for Museum Accreditation.

The Acting Chief Executive highlighted that three KPIs had been increased on page 8, including visitor numbers (increased from 660,000 to 680,000), learning visitors (increased from 80,000 to 85,000) and digital reach (increased from 728,000 to 745,700). The Acting Chief Executive noted a range of other amends and additions which were highlighted for Trustees.

The Acting Chief Executive advised Trustees that the draft Business Plan 2016/17 was based on a 5.7% budget cut and that feedback was expected from the Department in the coming week, with a revised submission required by DCAL, by 23 February.

The Chairman noted that Trustees were content with the approach being taken.

7.4 Voluntary Exit Scheme

The Acting Chief Executive spoke to the above document and informed Trustees that an internal project board chaired by the Acting Director of Finance had been established and that outsourcing of the payroll system was being set up which should improve communications with Civil Service Pensions (CSP) systems.

The Vice-Chairman reinforced that it was important to develop a staffing plan in parallel to the VE Scheme.

Mr Joseph Rice withdrew from the meeting at this stage (12pm).

8. BOARD OF TRUSTEES' COMMITTEES

8.1 Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

The Chairman of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee reminded Trustees that there had not been an Audit meeting in advance of this Board meeting and that minutes of the previous meeting remained in draft. The next meeting of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee is scheduled for 4 March and an update would be provided to the Board on 21 March.

8.2 General Purposes and Finance Committee

8.2.1 Adoption of Minutes of meeting held on 23 October 2015

The Board agreed to adopt the above minutes.

Proposed by: Professor Michael Catto

Seconded by: Dr Margaret Ward

8.2.2 Verbal update of meeting held on 29 January 2016

The Chairman of the General Purposes and Finance Committee highlighted that a number of papers brought before the Board at the meeting that day had also been reviewed at the General Purposes and Finance Committee the week before.

She advised the Board that, in response to a request by the General Purposes and Finance Committee, the Director of Marketing, Communications and Trading had brought a paper to the meeting on the Transport Museum shop. The Chairman of the General Purposes and Finance Committee noted this was a useful report summarising a number of practical actions which had been undertaken. She commended the staff on the impact of the actions and advised Trustees that a follow-up report would be coming back to the Committee.

The Chairman of the General Purposes and Finance Committee also advised Trustees that a first iteration of a new ICT Strategy had been reviewed by the Committee and the Executive Team had been asked to seek external expertise to further develop the strategy.

9. ASSEMBLY QUESTIONS

Trustees noted attached Assembly Question and management's response in respect of same.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman sought Trustees' approval to address item 11 AOB at this stage in the meeting before returning to item 10 on the new Strategy for Culture and Arts.

The Chairman asked the Acting Director of Collections & Interpretation to speak to two items: The opening of 'Silent Testimony' in Paris and the NI Science Festival.

Silent Testimony

The Acting Director of Collections & Interpretation informed Trustees that the Silent Testimony exhibition had opened in Paris on Thursday 28 January and had been attended by the Chairman, the Acting Director of Collections & Interpretation and the Head of Art, Mrs Kim Mawhinney, along with 250 other people including the Irish Ambassador. She advised Trustees that the exhibition had looked impressive and that it was not a venue National Museums Northern Ireland would usually lend to for environmental and security reasons.

It was acknowledged that the exhibition had received positive PR coverage including social media. The Acting Director of Collections & Interpretation advised Trustees that the Head of Art is working through plans to take the exhibition to San Sebastian and that she had several meetings in Boston recently on the same.

NI Science Festival

The Acting Director of Collections & Interpretation informed Trustees that the events at the Ulster Museum for Science Week in 2015 had been amongst the most successful in terms of participants and the LateLab evening event was the most successful individual event. She advised Trustees that the event this year would have a £5 admission fee and invited Trustees to attend on 26 February.

10. STRATEGY FOR CULTURE & ARTS 2016-26

The Acting Chief Executive provided some background information; she advised Trustees that the organisation had received the consultation paper late. The Acting Chief Executive advised the Board that the Department was seeking the organisation's broad support for the proposals and that following discussion with the Department, the organisation could take until the end of the month to respond.

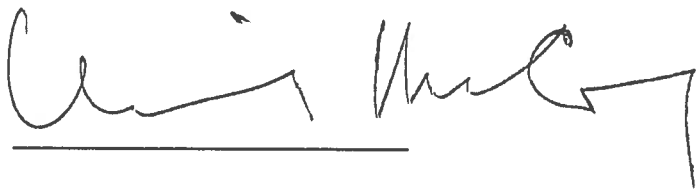
It was recognised that the draft was a useful starting point and that the next iteration should include observations of Trustees expressed at the meeting.

It was agreed that a revised response to the strategy would be circulated to Trustees by Friday 12 February for further feedback.

12. DATE, TIME & VENUE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Board of Trustees is scheduled to take place on Monday 21 March 2016 in Cultra Manor, at the Ulster Folk & Transport Museum.

The meeting closed at 1pm.

SIGNED: 

DATE: 21 March 2016