

National Galleries of Scotland Board of Trustees

Minute of the meeting of the Board of Trustees of the National Galleries of Scotland, held remotely (via Microsoft Teams) at **1330hrs** on Monday 30 March 2020.

Present:

Benny Higgins (Chairman)	
Nick Pearce	Willie Watt
Tricia Bey	Alistair Dodds
Catherine Muirden	Audrey Carlin
Edward Green	Hannah Rudman
Tari Lang	Andrew Wilson
Rucelle Soutar	

In Attendance:

- Sir John Leighton, Director-General
- Jo Coomber
- Jacqueline Ridge
- Bryan Robertson
- Chris Breward
- Valerie Urquhart

Secretariat: Elaine Anderson

Action

1 **Declarations of Interest**

The Chairman noted that he had become Chairman of the Fine Art Society.

2 **Chairman's Business**

The Chairman congratulated the Leadership Team on their management of the Coronavirus crisis so far.

The Board was asked to delegate authority to the sub-committees to deal with matters arising from the current situation, to enable nimble management and keep the trustees informed.

2.1 **Appointment of new Trustees**

The Chairman welcomed the two new trustees, Andrew Wilson and Rucelle Soutar, and noted the appointment of two additional trustees from 1 November 2020. The appointments had been announced by Scottish Government that morning.

3 **Minutes**

3.1 **Minute of the meeting of 27 January 2020**

Approved.

4 **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

5 **Impact of Coronavirus: Business Continuity Planning**

The Director-General commended the wider management team for their handling of the crisis so far and brought trustees up to date with current planning measures.

Immediate Contingency:

The Business Continuity Plan was working well so far. Perimeter security had been retained. Staff welfare was a top priority, including assisting in adapting to the new working environment. Mitigating income loss was also a priority.

Period of Closure:

Contingency planning remained a priority, but other routine priorities would also be able to be addressed. Re-planning the public programme, enhanced digital presence, SNG project and data cleansing were all examples of priority areas.

Planning for Recovery:

The working assumption is that we will be closed for at least three months, followed by a period of limiting measures such as controlling numbers of visitors. The summer programme will likely slip into at least the Autumn and perhaps later. There will also be a fall-out from the hit on public sector finances. On the positive side, galleries will remain desirable places to visit as consumers seek out positive experiences.

It was noted that the collection databases could still be accessed remotely and that this was a good opportunity to clean up the data.

It was noted that there was significant opportunity to develop new digital content and change the way we reach out to visitors. It was suggested that curators could deliver lectures online as part of a broader events programme.

Colleagues noted that the BBC Scotland website had useful ideas online. Ms Coomber commented that the BBC Scotland is looking at doing a documentary on closed museums and galleries. There is also a similar UK-wide plan in train.

Retail: Ms Coomber explained that ecommerce had been closed down in the interim, therefore NGS was not getting the benefit of online shopping. The products remained on the website for browsing and the warehouse would be reopened in due course. The trustees were keen that the online shop was reopened as soon

as was practical.

Mr Wilson suggested that the galleries give some thought to use of the government influencer network which had been set up to share health messages. This was due to be launched shortly.

Contacts with colleagues in other institutions suggest that they are investigating using the furlough scheme. NGS will explore it with Scottish Government and consider whether it will be able to cover the cost of retail or SVS staff.

Reserved Business

Redacted

Open Business

8 Reports

- 8.1 **Collection: Artist Rooms Loan**
Bruce Nauman, *Double Poke in the Eye II*, 1985
Approved with thanks to the Artist Rooms Foundation.

9 Any Other Business

Ms Coomber noted that there would be a note coming out from the press team about the summer exhibitions to enable trustees to explain what was happening if members of the public asked.

10 Date of Next Meeting

Monday 22 June 2020.