

National Galleries of Scotland Board of Trustees

Minute of the meeting of the Board of Trustees held virtually via MS Teams on Monday 7 September 2020 at 1330hrs.

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
Line Clausen Pedersen
Valerie Urquhart (items 5-8)
Adam Christie (item 6)

Secretariat: Elaine Anderson

Open Business

1 Declarations of Interest

There were no new declarations of interest.

2 Chairman's Business

Committee Membership:

Trustees approved the appointment of Rucelle Soutar to the Audit & Risk Committee and Audrey Carlin as Chair of the Major Capital Programme Committee, both to replace Tricia Bey who was due to retire from office at the end of October. It was agreed also that Ms Bey could remain on the Major Capital Programme Committee in an advisory capacity to retain continuity with the development of the capital programme.

There were two further positions which would become vacant when Catherine Muirden retired from office at the end of October: Chair of the Remuneration Committee and member of the Ethics Committee. Those positions would be filled in due course.

3 Minute of the meeting of 22 June 2020

The minute of the meeting of 22 June was approved as a correct record.

4 **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

5 **Director-General's Report**

The Director-General updated colleagues on the reopening of the galleries. The SNG and Modern One had reopened in the previous few weeks. Colleagues were commended on their hard work in managing this complex process.

Equalities:

The Director-General commented on progress with the equalities work in relation to Black Lives Matter, noting that a report would come to the Board later in the year. The Chairman was sponsoring the Equalities Working Group on behalf of the trustees. It was noted that two national groups had been set up in Scotland, to which NGS hoped to contribute.

Capital projects:

Much discussion had been carried out on assessing the impact of Covid on the major capital projects. A joint meeting of the ARC and MCP had been set up for next week to discuss this further.

Artist Rooms and Anthony d'Offay;

Discussion redacted.

6 **Reopening and Recovery: Update on Progress**

Adam Christie in attendance

Mr Robertson explained the approach to re-opening and the key dates on the run up to opening the SNG and Modern One in recent weeks.

Brian Doneghan, Head of Operations, was commended for his robust management of the process.

Mr Christie outlined some of the feedback received from visitors so far, either by email survey or on the day of the visit via front-of-house colleagues. Mystery shopper visits had also restarted and would feed into the process. Feedback so far had been very positive, with lots of excellent comments about the front-of-house team. The Smartify app had proved popular. There had been some disappointment noted about the lack of access to the Impressionists and smaller room closures, but things had been put in place to manage those expectations and make as much of the gallery space available as possible. All feedback, positive

and negative, was being taken into account and managed as swiftly as possible.

Feedback for Modern One had been particularly positive in the early days of reopening.

A date of 24 October had been set for the reopening of Modern Two and the opening of the Harryhausen exhibition.

Mr Robertson noted the cost implications of opening up all galleries. Additional staff members were required for each gallery, which may make opening all sites at the same time prohibitive. This was currently under review.

In terms of staff returning to site, discussions were underway to ensure that only those who needed to be on site would return in the short term. Others would remain working from home. Processes had been put in place to reassure colleagues of the safety of the sites.

Trustees raised a number of queries, commending the team for the excellent work so far. The future remained uncertain and would doubtless present more challenge going forward.

Ms Coomber noted that some of the shops and cafes had reopened. Further information would be provided in the Public Engagement report.

The Director-General noted that the organisation had to start considering strategic planning in relation to the new world. This process was underway, with the assistance of Andrew Wilson.

Reserved Business

7 Financial Matters

Discussion redacted.

8 Major Projects Progress Reports

Discussion redacted.

Open Business

9 Reports

9.1 Collection & Research and Collection Care

Ms Pedersen introduced the report and invited questions.

9.1.1 *Edinburgh: The Dean* by James Paterson 1854-1932

Trustees approved the use of the Laird Trust Fund to purchase this work.

9.2 **Public Programme 2020-21**

Ms Pedersen outlined the current programme and plans for the remainder of the year. The reopening date for the Portrait Gallery had not been set yet, however its opening show would be focused on experiences from 2020. The Harryhausen installation was well underway for opening at Modern Two at the end of October.

Trustees queried why the Harryhausen show was on for such a long period of time. Ms Coomber noted that the exhibition was expensive to run and was a very immersive experience. There was also much interest externally in the show. The long run would allow more visitors to attend (bearing in mind reduced capacity) and maximise the opportunity. It was hoped that the retail offer could meet demand, although purchasing had been limited due to cash flow challenges. There was excellent opportunity to sell online also.

9.3 **Public Engagement Quarterly Report**

Ms Coomber reported on activities and output within the public engagement directorate.

Face coverings had been created by community groups and shared with the local community at Granton.

Ms Coomber noted that significant advance ticket sales for Harryhausen. Ecommerce had been very successful and online sales had increased significantly. Donations online had also increased having added an ask to ticket bookings.

Modern One café was operating at 40-50% of previous capacity. At the Link this was significantly lower, but that was most likely to do with the low numbers of people in the city centre.

Ms Rudman noted that success of the digital content and the particular success of the Friday Art Quiz.

9.4 **Chief Operating Officer: Quarterly Report**

Mr Robertson noted that much of the work of his team had focused on the reopening over the last few months. The report was noted.

Trustees expressed some concern that NGS may lose capital funding in relation to estates spend, however Mr Robertson noted that a full programme had been set out to use the capital allocation.

In relation to the new CRM system, Ms Rudman queried whether our cyber security strategy covers the increased risk for cyber attack, as this is a clear target for hackers seeking personal and credit card data.

It was suggested that the Chairman wrote to staff thanking them for their efforts on behalf of the Board. Trustees were keen that colleagues were aware of the trustees' appreciation.

10 **Compliance & Risk**

10.1 **Safeguarding (Protection of Children & Vulnerable Adults)**

Nothing to report.

11 **Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

12 **Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Board of Trustees will be held on Monday 26 October 2020 at 1330 hrs

The Chairman was keen for trustees to get together physically before the end of the year, particularly to give new trustees the chance to formally meet the rest of the Board. Options to be considered.