

National Galleries of Scotland Board of Trustees

Public minute of the meeting of the Board of Trustees held virtually via MS Teams on Monday 23 November 2020 at 1330hrs.

Present: Benny Higgins (Chairman)
Alistair Dodds
Audrey Carlin
Edward Green
Tari Lang
Rucelle Soutar
Lynn Richmond
Chris Sibbald
Hannah Rudman
Andrew Wilson

In Attendance: Sir John Leighton, Director-General
Jo Coomber
Jacqueline Ridge
Bryan Robertson
Line Clausen Pedersen
Valerie Urquhart (items 1-9)

Apologies: Nick Pearce
Willie Watt

Secretariat: Elaine Anderson

Open Business

1 Declarations of Interest

There were no new declarations of interest. It was noted that the Register of Interests was updated annually and published on the NGS website.

2 Chairman's Business

The Chairman welcomed two new trustees to the Board: Chris Sibbald and Lynn Richmond.

Committee Membership:

Trustees approved the appointment of Andrew Wilson to the Ethics Committee. Trustees also noted that Chris Sibbald and Hannah Rudman had been asked to join the Trading Company Board and this would be approved at the next Trading Company Board meeting.

The Remuneration Committee would be chaired in the interim by Mr Higgins and trustees ratified the ex officio appointment of Catherine Muirden to the committee for a period of twelve months following her departure from the Board of Trustees.

3 Minute of the meeting of 26 October 2020

The minute of the meeting of 26 October was approved as a correct record.

4 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

5 Director-General's Report

The Director-General gave trustees an update on matters arising around the galleries. NGS was responding well to the revised Covid guidelines and uncertainties as the new tier system was introduced. Edinburgh remained in tier 3. This allowed the galleries to remain open although less visitors could travel into Edinburgh.

The Portrait Gallery had reopened at the beginning of November and had so far been operating successfully. The Director-General noted that staff were in some cases having to travel from tier 4 areas, which added an extra level of stress for colleagues. Staff however appeared to be coping well.

Later this week NGS would be going public with the revised timeline for the SNG project.

Libraries and print rooms remain closed, but there had been good momentum on research following the return of colleagues from furlough at the start of the month.

The Director-General considered that NGS was doing well in the challenging circumstances.

Mr Wilson asked trustees to ensure that NGS seeks additional funding as required from the government funding source which is likely to become available.

6 Reopening and Recovery: Update on Progress

Mr Robertson outlined the latest updates on reopening the galleries. All four galleries were now open, with the Portrait Gallery opening on 8 November. It was noted that Modern One would close on 10 January temporarily until 27 March during reinstallation and lift repairs.

The team had been on standby to respond quickly to any change in Covid restrictions, but this had not been needed so far.

The Chairman sought feedback on visitor experience. It was noted that the team was running mystery shops as well as exit questionnaires to identify any concerns. There was a clear positive impact on people's well-being. Visitor satisfaction had been generally good. Any complaints which could be acted upon, had been.

Ms Coomber agreed to give a report to the next meeting to share visitor feedback.

JC

10 Reports

10.1 One Collection

Ms Clausen Pedersen presented the report and invited questions, sharing details of a recent, charming acquisition by Thomas Fearnley which had been gifted by Asbjorn Lunde. Another work had been recently acquired by Barbara Rae, with the financial assistance of a former trustee.

10.2 Public Programme 2020-21

Ms Clausen Pedersen outlined the public programme for the next few months, including Harryhausen at M2 and You are Here at the PG. A conservation live project was being undertaken at the RSA building.

10.3 Public Engagement Quarterly Report

Ms Coomber explained the level of digital media used in the Harryhausen show. This was much more ambitious than had been tried before and had been incredibly successful. The additional media reach for the show had also been significant. The shop was exceeding expectation. A late night had been trialled and another was planned.

You are Here had had over 200 submissions and more were coming in. Ms Coomber explained that the exhibition is changed weekly to keep it fresh and current.

The e-commerce performance had been excellent and was improving all the time.

The Art Competition for Schools was being exhibited at M1 currently and had proved very popular.

11 Compliance & Risk

11.1 Safeguarding (Protection of Children & Vulnerable Adults)

Nothing to report.

12 Any Other Business

There was no other business.

13 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Board of Trustees will be held on Monday 25 January 2021 at 1330 hrs