

**Science Museum Group Board of Trustees Meeting
Held Virtually via Microsoft Teams
Wednesday 3 March 2021, 2.00-5:00PM**

Present:

Mary Archer (Chair)
Brian Cantor
Judith Donovan
Sarah Dry
Sharon Flood
Jo Foster
Russell Foster
Peter Hendy
Ludmilla Jordanova
Ajit Lalvani
Iain McIntosh
Lopa Patel
David Phoenix
Sarah Staniforth
Steven Underwood
Anton Valk
Fiona Woolf

In attendance:

Ian Blatchford, SMG Director
Jonathan Newby, SMG Managing Director
Shri Mukundagiri, Director of Corporate Services
Roger Highfield, SMG Science Director
Deborah Myers, SMG Director of Development
Julia Knights, Deputy Director, Science Museum
Peter Dickinson, SMG Director of Communications
Sally MacDonald, Director, Science and Industry Museum (SIM)
Jo Quinton-Tulloch, Director, National Science & Media Museum (NSMM)
Judith McNicol, Director, National Railway Museum (NRM)
Helen Jones, Director of Global Engagement & Strategy
Lacie Southon, SMG Board Secretary

Luan Anderson, Masterplan Programme Director (*for item 6*)
Anna Dejean, Acting Masterplan Director (*for item 9.1*)

1 Apologies for Absence

There were apologies noted from Hannah Fry.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no new declarations of interest.

3 Minutes of SMG Board Meeting held on 2 December 2020 and matters arising
The Board approved the previous minutes of the SMG Board Meeting.

The Board approved the revised Collections Development Policy.

4 Chair's Report

The paper that had been circulated previously was noted. It was reported that Brian Cantor and Lopa Patel had been reappointed for a second four-year term.

It was reported that SMG is hopefully nearing agreement with Darlington Borough Council on the matter of Locomotion No. 1 and the SMG Chair thanked colleagues for their involvement and hard work.

5 Director's Report

It was reported that the Government had confirmed a funding package for the sector for 2021/22 and SMG is waiting on confirmation on the exact amount to be received.

It was noted that SMG is engaged in a consultancy project regarding the feasibility of a new science museum in Birmingham.

It was stated that at the Board meeting in June 2021 a presentation would be given on the upcoming Ancient Greek Science exhibition.

The Board noted the update on a sponsorship Memorandum of Understanding for the Energy Revolution Gallery, and the wider context in terms of energy policy and international strategy. It also noted that due diligence work in the context of the Transition Pathway Initiative would continue.

The Board approved the continuation of underwriting from SMG reserves for the Sound and Vision Gallery project at the National Science & Media Museum in Bradford.

Luan Anderson joined the meeting.

6 **Vision 2025: Priorities and Commitments**

The Vision 2025 priorities and commitments were presented. The Board was asked to:

- Authorise the recommended priority projects within the Vision 2025 programme to proceed to the stated programme, noting the commitments this requires from SMG.
- Authorise additional funding covering the next stages of expenditure from March 2021 until end of RIBA stages noted in section 3.0 based on delivery milestones and outcomes as set out in this paper.
- Note how these requests fit within the overall financial considerations of Vision 2025 and SMG.

The Board approved the recommendations.

7 **SMG: Setting a Net Zero Target**

The paper that had been circulated previously was noted.

A discussion was had regarding the commitment to 2033 and the associated offsetting cost against other priorities.

A discussion was had regarding the rationale for choosing 2033. It was explained that the main reason is due to the cost and the rate at which SMG would have to decarbonise.

The Board approved the recommendation to achieve Net Zero by 2033.

8 **Progress report: Inspiring Futures 5-year Review**

The paper that had been circulated previously was noted. It was explained that the consultations with the sub-committees had taken place, and sub-committee Chairs were invited to offer further views offline.

It was suggested that workshops would be scheduled in Summer 2021 to present the emerging shape of the Strategy. It was advised that thought should be given to what the Strategy means for individual museums in order to give a clear sense of what the contribution to the workshops should be.

A discussion was had around Digital. Historically Digital had supported SMG's physical presence, but digital-only visitors were now as important as physical ones and the consultancy work currently under way would hopefully help clarify this different approach. The consultant's interim report would be taken to the Digital Advisory Board in March 2021 and it was suggested that a presentation be given to the Board at the June 2021 meeting.

Ian Blatchford and Peter Hendy left the meeting.

9 **Masterplan and Estate Committee update**

It was reported that a Joint Masterplan and Estate / Finance Committee meeting took place in January and there was a suggestion this might be done on an annual basis.

The Estates Asset Management Plan was discussed at the Joint Committee, it was a good piece of work and was under ongoing review by both Committees.

The lease surrender for the Air & Space Hall at SIM was discussed. SMG was in a good position to surrender the lease back to Manchester City Council and negotiations are ongoing. The surrender was subject to approval and final legal documentation was awaited. As a condition of this there was a commitment to commence the decant at a cost to SMG of £1.4m to extricate objects, in order to give vacant possession back to Manchester City Council. There was a small amount of residual risk, but the deal would, on completion, ultimately release SMG from the full repairing liability of a building that is no longer fit for museum purpose.

Anna Dejean joined the meeting.

9.1 **SIM Power Hall – Salix Grant**

The paper that had been circulated previously was noted. It was explained the revised Power Hall scope would be coupled with a decarbonisation initiative.

The original project budget had proven to be insufficient. The project had therefore been considered again in line with sustainability aims and an opportunity to deliver the first stage of decarbonisation for the building had been identified. In parallel with that, at the end of 2020, a £4.3m grant from Salix Finance had been secured for decarbonisation work at SIM.

The new proposal was to repair the building, improve visitor experience and carry out decarbonisation works. This would include infrastructure for generating steam for use in the Power Hall. The new proposal would see Power Hall reopen in late 2023.

The total budget required was £12.9m, with £11.9m already secured. It was proposed that the £1m shortfall would be funded through legacy gifts and designation of secured reserves.

The Board approved the recommendation for the new scope and budget.

Anna Dejean left the meeting.

10 **Finance Committee update**

10.1 **This Year: SMG 2020/21 Management Accounts and Finance Report**

The Management Accounts reported an operating surplus for the year due to the impact of the third national lockdown and the assumption of the extension of the furlough scheme. Once taken with other considerations such as the Air & Space Hall provision, as well as the proposal on the general reserves policy, the balance of risks and opportunities meant it was anticipated that SMG would present a breakeven position at the end of the financial year.

It was reported that SMG held general reserves in unrestricted funds of £1.5m. It was recommended that the reserves target is increased from £1.5m to £3m.

The Board approved the general reserves policy.

Peter Hendy re-joined the meeting.

10.2 **Next Year: SMG 2021/22 Budget and Plan**

The paper that had been circulated previously was noted.

It was reported that SMG had previously forecast a deficit of £17m for 2021/22. Following a thorough budget review process and efficiency proposals, £7.3m in savings had been achieved. As well as this, a case had been made to Government for emergency Covid funding and detail from the Government announcement around a package to support the sector was awaited.

The Government announcement also included the extension of the furlough scheme to September 2021 and business rates holidays were likely to be extended to the museum sector.

All elements taken together resulted in a credible plan to deliver a balanced budget for the next financial year. It was recommended that the SMG 2021/22 Budget approval be delegated to an extraordinary Finance Committee to allow a decision to be made following further detail from DCMS on the emergency Covid funding.

A representative from the Audit and Risk Committee would attend the extraordinary Finance Committee.

The Board approved delegation of the SMG 2021/22 Budget to the extraordinary Finance Committee on Tuesday 9 March.

In the interest of time, Trustees were invited to provide comments on the SMG Plan to the Director of Corporate Services after the meeting. **(Action: ALL)**

11 **Audit and Risk Committee update**

11.1 **SMG Audit and Risk Finance Report**

The paper that had been circulated previously was noted.

Ian Blatchford re-joined the meeting.

11.2 **SMG Health, Safety & Wellbeing Report**

The paper that had been circulated previously was noted. It was reported that colleague wellbeing remains a high priority and mandatory wellbeing training was in place for all managers, alongside the mental health first aider scheme. It was suggested colleague surveys and audits with focus around wellbeing would be useful.

It was noted that SMG is reviewing the covid testing policy as part of the preparation for reopening sites.

It was stated that building ventilation is being reviewed from a covid-secure context and collections management context and guidelines on the subject would be reissued to all colleagues.

11.3 **Ethics Policy**

The paper that had been circulated previously was noted and the minor changes were explained. It was agreed that the word 'unacceptable' would be removed when referring to 'conflict of interest' on page four of the policy. **(Action: JN/LS)**

Provided that the above amend be made, **the Board approved** the Ethics Policy.

12 **Collections and Research Committee update**

It was reported that the committee received a presentation on the National Collection Centre which provided information on the planned improvements for collection storage.

It was stated that as part of the review of Libraries and Archives, a new position of Head of Libraries and Archive would be appointed to drive forward digitisation and the SMG strategy. It was expected that a Digital Preservation Manager would be appointed to support making improvements and mitigate risks.

12.1 **Acquisitions and Transfers/Removals Report**

The paper that had been circulated previously was noted. **The Board approved** the Board of Survey recommendations of 28 October 2020.

13 **Railway Heritage Designation Advisory Board Approvals**

The paper that had been circulated previously was noted.

14 **Any other business**

There was no further business.

Signed by Chair:



Date: 30 June 2021