

**Science Museum Group Board of Trustees Meeting**  
**Smith Centre Boardroom**  
**Wednesday 4 March 2020, 2:00-5:30PM**

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**Present:**

Mary Archer (Chair)  
Judith Donovan  
Sharon Flood  
Jo Foster  
Hannah Fry  
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  
Karen Livingstone, SMG Director of Masterplan and Estates  
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)  
Lacie Southon, SMG Board Secretary  
  
Zarina Camal (Observer)

**Governance Review Feedback Report**

Caroline Copeman and Fiona Ash from Cass Business School presented their findings from the SMG Governance Review. **The Board discussed the findings and it was agreed** that the Board Chair, Deputy Chair and Board Secretary would use the recommendations, together with the comments from the Board to formulate an action plan. **(Action: MA/DP/LS)**

**Science Fiction Exhibition Update**

Gemma Levett, Associate Director of Public Engagement, and Glyn Morgan, Project Curator, presented an update on the Science Fiction Exhibition.

*Sharon Flood joined the meeting.*

1 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies had been received from Brian Cantor, Russell Foster and Peter Hendy.

2 **Declarations of Interest**

No interests were declared in items on the agenda.

3 **Minutes of Board Meeting on 4 December 2019 and matters arising**

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved and signed by the Chair.

3.1 Matters arising from the minutes:

- **SMG Maintenance Policy:** It was confirmed that the SMG maintenance policies and regimes are set out in the maintenance contract. The costs, spend /square metre, and approach have been benchmarked in the sector, as part of the feasibility study undertaken prior to developing the new contract requirements.
- **Science Fiction Project:** It was confirmed that SMG had sought external legal advice and the proposed commercial partners would be taking out the appropriate insurance for overseas venues for the exhibition tour. It was also confirmed that the exact timeframe for the project is still to be confirmed but the team would aim to present the contract for

Board approval at the Board meeting in June 2020; email approval would be considered as an alternative.

- **Experitots Programme:** It was reported that the Learning team investigated and made changes to the programme in London in terms of cost and marketing fees applied to children. Since the changes were implemented, the success of the programme had improved.

#### 4 **Chair's Report**

The paper that had been circulated previously was noted. It was reported that Sarah Staniforth would be chairing the Inspiring Futures Steering Group and the SMG Chair invited Trustees to let her know if they were interested in joining the Group, noting that all Trustees would have an opportunity to be involved in workshops and other engagement events.

##### 4.1 **Fellowship Nominations Committee Terms of Reference**

The paper that had been circulated previously was noted. **The Board approved the recommendations.**

#### 5 **Director's Report**

The paper that had been circulated previously was noted. In addition:

5.1 It was reported that the COP26 launch held at the Science Museum on 4 February 2020 was a great success and received extensive national and international media coverage.

5.2 An update was provided on SMG's approach to Coronavirus contingency planning. It was explained that regular meetings with key stakeholders across the group had been scheduled to focus on business continuity planning (including staff wellbeing, visitor welfare, closure scenarios), communications and financial impact. SMG are taking government advice and are in close contact with DCMS. The costs per week impact if the Museum were advised to close by the Government were being estimated.

#### 6 **Collections Services Strategy**

The paper that had been circulated previously was noted. Jack Kirby, Group Head of Collections, joined the meeting to present the Strategy update.

6.1 It was noted that since the first strategy was approved by the Board in 2015, significant improvements had been made with only one low risk finding in the last internal audit.

6.2 It was suggested that the strategic objectives could be more ambitious.

*Sally MacDonald left the meeting.*

6.3 A discussion was had regarding KPIs beyond 2023 and it was noted that these would be set nearer the time as these would be partly dependent on the available budget.

6.4 It was suggested that there might be SMG research apprenticeship opportunities in the North, particularly around Bradford and Shildon, where people often do not have access to Museum Collections and Curatorial opportunities.

6.5 **The Board approved** the Collections Services Strategy.


#### 7 **Wonderlab at Railway Museum**

Charlotte Kingston, Head of Interpretation & Design, and Rose Mockford, Lead Interactive Gallery Curator, presented an update on the progress of the Wonderlab project at the Railway Museum.

- 7.1 It was suggested that information around railway sustainability and challenges be considered during the content and design development stages.
- 7.2 It was confirmed that the team is using lessons learned from both Wonderlabs in Bradford and in London to improve health & safety and access.
- 8 **Inspiring Futures Update**
- 8.1 **Rising Priorities**  
It was noted that at the Board Strategy Day in October 2019, the Board delegated authority to the Chair to sign off the revised 'Rising Priorities' text. As agreed, the Chair had approved the update in February 2020. **The Board endorsed the Chair's approval.**
- 8.2 **5-Year Review**  
The paper that had been circulated previously was noted. In addition:
- 8.2.1 A discussion was had regarding areas of focus for the Inspiring Futures Steering Group. It was suggested these should include colleague engagement, training, professional development and technology.
- 8.2.2 **The Board agreed** with the approach to the Inspiring Futures 5-year review.
- 9 **Exhibition Strategy**  
The paper that had been circulated previously was noted. In addition:
- 9.1 A discussion was had regarding the use of the terms STEM and STEAM. **It was agreed** that where SMG positions itself could be further considered in future, though it was generally felt that SMG is and should remain firmly focussed on STEM.
- 9.2 **The Board approved** the Exhibition Strategy.
- 10 **Masterplan & Estate Committee**  
It was reported that the completion of Building ONE would be delayed by 18 weeks with completion now expected to be at the end July 2020. It was explained that the delay was caused the main contractor (Kier) actioning a change in M&E contractor. Within the contract, SMG is permitted to charge the main contractor weekly for financial damages from the originally agreed completion date (16 March 2020).
- 10.1 **Central Hall Design Competition Winner**  
The paper that had been circulated previously was noted.
- 10.1.1 **The Board approved** the appointment Feilden Fowles with Max Fordham and Price & Myers as designers. **The Board also agreed** to the commitment of funds for the next phase of design in the range of £350-500k with exact costs to be presented to the Board for review later this year.
- 10.1.2 It was noted that the competition results and reports are subject to OJEU competition and procurement regulations and should be treated in strict confidence. It was stated that the winner would be announced on 24 March 2020 with work due to commence in May 2020.
- 11 **Finance Committee**  
It was reported that the committee approved the Trans-Siberian Exhibition and Living with Cancer Exhibition.
- 11.1 **SMG Budget & Plan 2020-21**  
The paper that had been circulated previously was noted. In addition:

- 11.1.1 It was stated that to reach a balanced position all departments had been asked to review budgets and changes included the Development income target being increased and costs being reduced across the public programme.
- 11.1.2 It was highlighted that there are, at the time of the report, £2.7m in unfunded risks that could materialise and will be managed through the year.
- 11.1.3 The Board raised concerns that SMG was chronically underfunded, especially at the museums in the North, and are in an unsustainable financial position.
- 11.1.4 The Board commended the Director of Corporate Services and wider team for their efforts in improving the process, position and how financial information is presented.
- 11.1.5 It was noted that risk of closure due to Coronavirus is not included in the presented budget and would need to be considered. **(Action: SMu)** In the event of closure, SMG would have to use funds from reserves.
- 11.1.6 **The Board approved** the budget and plan for 2020-21.
- 11.2 **SMG Management Accounts**  
The paper that had been circulated previously was noted.
- 12 **Audit & Risk Committee**  
It was reported that the recent committee meeting had discussed progress on the internal and external audits. A PWC internal audit on GDPR compliance is expected to be completed shortly. It was confirmed that the SMG Safeguarding Policy had been approved by the committee.
- 12.1 **Health & Safety Report**  
The paper that had been circulated previously was noted. In addition:
  - 12.1.1 It was stated that Managing Director had received the Chain Bridge Honey Farm investigation report, which included recommendations around process improvements. It was confirmed that the potential further liability was being managed and there were no critical risks to report.
- 12.2 **Risk Management Strategy & Policy**  
**The Board agreed** that SMG's view of financial risk should be reviewed, and a more granular and explicit approach considered. A revised Policy would be presented to the Board for approval in June 2020. **(Action: SMu)**
- 12.3 **Recommendations arising from PWC Audit of Advisory Boards**  
The paper that had been circulated previously was noted. In addition:
  - 12.3.1 **The Board agreed** to accept the recommendations from PWC with one exception regarding Terms of Reference. **It was agreed** that the Terms of Reference would remain standardised to continue to help embed the group culture.
  - 12.3.2 It was noted that the Locomotion Advisory Board ("LAB") Terms of Reference differ regarding membership, which includes both SMG and Durham County Council representation. **It was agreed** the LAB Chair would review the Terms of Reference and a revised version would be presented to the Board for approval in June 2020. **(Action: MA/LS/LJ)**
  - 12.3.2 **The Board agreed to** allow Advisory Boards to hold up to three regular meetings per year and an optional strategy day every 2-3 years, with a preference for holding this in another of the Group's museums. The Board Secretary and Board Chair would ensure the Terms of Reference are brought in line with this agreement. **(Action: LS/MA)**

- 13     **Board of Survey Recommendations**  
The paper that had been circulated previously was noted. **The Board approved** the recommendations.
- 14     **Railway Heritage Designation Advisory Board Recommendations**  
The paper that had been circulated previously was noted. **The Board approved** the recommendations.
- 15     **Minutes and reports from SMG Board sub-committees and working groups**  
The paper that had been circulated previously was noted.
- 16     **Any other business**  
MA commended LS for her performance in the Board Secretary role. There was no further business to report.

Signed by Chair: 

Date: 07/05/2020