

**Science Museum Group Board of Trustees Meeting**  
**Smith Centre Boardroom**  
**Wednesday 4 Dec 2019, 2:00 PM — 5:00PM**

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**Present:**

Mary Archer (Chair)  
Brian Cantor  
Judith Donovan  
Sharon Flood  
Russell Foster  
Peter Hendy  
Jo Foster  
Anton Valk  
Ludmilla Jordanova  
Ajit Lalvani  
Iain McIntosh  
Lopa Patel  
David Phoenix  
Sarah Staniforth  
Steven Underwood  
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  
Sally MacDonald, Director, Science and Industry Museum (SIM)  
Jo Quinton-Tulloch, Director, National Science & Media Museum (NSMM)  
Judith McNicol, Director, National Railway Museum (NRM)  
Sian Thompson, SMG Board Secretary  
  
Lacie Southon, EA to Director of Corporate Services (Observer)  
Fiona Ash, Cass Business School (Observer)  
Caroline Copeman, Cass Business School (Observer)

**1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies had been received from Hannah Fry.

**2 Declarations of Interest**

No interests were declared in items on the agenda.

**3 Minutes of Board Meeting and Strategy Day on 15-16 Oct and matters arising**

**3.1 Draft Minutes of SMG Board Meeting, 15 Oct 2019**

The description in item 10.2 would be amended to state 'potentially hazardous'. The minutes were approved and signed by the Chair.

**3.2 Draft Minutes of SMG Board Strategy Day, 16 Oct 2019**

The minutes were approved and signed by the Chair. It was noted that the Group Exhibitions Strategy would be presented to the Board for approval at its next meeting in March 2020. **(Action: ST/LS)**

**4 Chair's Report**

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

- a. The Board had received an update presentation on the *Technicians Gallery* project ahead of the meeting. This project aimed to introduce young people to the importance of technology and engineering and inspire future careers in these fields;
- b. The *Medicine: The Welcome Galleries* project had been a huge success. The two curatorial leads on the project, Emily Scott-Dearing and Natasha McEnroe, were highly praised by the Board;
- c. A discussion was had regarding the *Art of Innovation* exhibition and while it was confirmed that the SMG Director and the Science Museum Head of Collections would soon be attending the Jaipur

Literature Festival to promote the exhibition, there were otherwise no plans for a tour (owing to existing loan arrangements);

- d. A decision was expected in January regarding funding from the Government's Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) for York Central. This would be essential for the relocation of Leeman Road. Architects had also been shortlisted for the Central Hall project and trustees were encouraged to visit the designs that would be on display at NRM from February 2020;
- e. The Board had approved the recommendations of the Remuneration Committee in its closed session.

#### 4.1 Recommendations from Fellowship Nominations Committee

4.1.1 The paper that had been circulated previously was noted. A discussion was had regarding the criteria for awarding Fellowships and **it was agreed** that further work was needed to soften the wording around donations, as this was not an essential criterion. **It was also agreed** that future reports should include the longlist of candidates that had been considered by the committee.  
**(Actions: ST/DM/RH)**

4.1.2 **The Board approved the recommendations.** It was also noted that this year's list had been of a particularly high calibre.

#### 5 Director's Report

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

- 5.1 It was noted that Anna Dejean, Project Director for the *Medicine: The Wellcome Galleries* project, also deserved a special commendation;
- 5.2 Sustainability issues continued to be a big priority for SMG. It was noted that the *Feeding Tomorrow* project was being repositioned in light of the importance of these issues, and the next temporary exhibition at the Science Museum would focus on carbon capture. SMG was also keen to explore partnership opportunities with the Woodland Trust and an SMG trustee offered to help the SMG Director in this regard **(Action: JF/IB)**
- 5.3 Trustees were strongly encouraged to attend upcoming joint workshops between the Science Museum and BP, as well as workshop sessions focused around Phase II of the Science Museum Masterplan;
- 5.4 Trustees were also reminded to contact the Directorate office should they be contacted by sustainability and climate change campaign groups, as SMG had a clear positioning statement on such issues;
- 5.5 A discussion was had regarding the sustainability of the new boiler in SIM's Power Hall. The SIM Director confirmed that there was more work to do, but it remained a high priority for the team, as well as introducing sustainability issues into the content of the new gallery.

*Roger Highfield left the meeting.*

#### 6 Masterplan and Estate Committee: Verbal Update

- 6.1 It was reported that the recent committee meeting had discussed the challenges of the 10-year funding plan for the SMG Estate, as well as the current budget position, ahead of presentation to the SMG Finance Committee.
- 6.2 A discussion was had regarding whether SMG should have a maintenance policy in addition to a preventative maintenance programme. **It was agreed** that SMG should benchmark itself against other national museums and large organisations responsible for historic estates **(Action: KL)**.

#### 7 Finance Committee

It was reported that the recent committee meeting had focused on three main areas: forecasting for

future years, the ICT Desktop Refresh project (a big investment for SMG involving the replacement of c.1200 devices across the organisation) and the 10-year funding plan for Estates maintenance.

#### 7.1 SMG Finance Report

The paper that had been circulated previously was noted. It was also noted that the report was intended as a one-off paper in place of the usual management accounts, in order to give an update on the emerging financial position for 2019/20, as well as provide an update on the budgeting process for 2020/21. In summary:

- 7.1.1 While the forecast currently projected a deficit at the end of the current FY, the main adjustment against previous reports was the movement in capital funds (capital Grant-in-Aid shown alongside capital expenditure). There was also a projected unbudgeted increase in staff costs. It was confirmed that SMG was currently working on the assumption that SMG reserves would be required to offset these increases;
- 7.1.2 The Board recognised that the financial reporting was a work in progress (especially given recent changes in finance personnel) but commended the clarity of the general approach. The Director of Corporate Services would further scrutinise the current fiscal position and recommence work on the mid-term financial strategy (ideally a 3-year forward plan) for future years. **(Action: SM)**.
- 7.1.3 It was noted that the 2020/21 budget was due for approval at the Board's next meeting in March 2020. While a first cut had already been presented to the SMG Finance Committee, it was also noted that additional Finance Committee meetings might be necessary in order to help support the budgeting process **(Action: SM/LS)**.

#### 7.2 Science Fiction: Project Approval

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

- 7.2.1 It was noted that this project would be a new way of working for SMG's existing exhibition team on several fronts: signing an MOU with a commercial entertainment company; writing off costs already expended; and using a team that would deliver future projects (with *Science Fiction* being the first) as part of a new exhibitions team structure. The latter point was also a key element of the Group Exhibitions Strategy;
- 7.2.2 A discussion was had regarding the new direction for the project, including risks and mitigating actions.
- 7.2.3 It was suggested that SMG might explore taking out insurance relating specifically to the project, as well as seeking additional external legal advice. This approach would be investigated **(Action: JN)**;
- 7.2.4 It was agreed that, the exhibition content leads would present the project to the Board at its next meeting in March 2020 **(Action: ST/LS)**;
- 7.2.5 It was also noted that further approvals needed to be sought from the Board before the contract was signed. It was possible that the timeframe for the project would not align with Board meeting dates, and so alternative methods for seeking the necessary approval would be explored **(Action: JN)**;
- 7.2.6 **The Board approved** the signing of a non-binding MOU (and associated changes to the project scope and budget) so that SMG could progress to contract negotiations.

#### 7.3 SMG Plan: Mid-Year Progress Report

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

- 7.3.1 It was noted (for the benefit of new trustees) that the SMG plan was structured around the principles outlined in *Inspiring Futures*;

7.3.2 A discussion was had regarding the Experitots programme (a monthly activities programme for babies and toddlers). It was confirmed that while this had been very successful at SIM, it had been less so at the Science Museum. The reasons for this would be investigated with the SMG Learning team (**Action: JN**);

7.3.3 A discussion was had regarding SMG's current approach to planning – particularly whether it might be prudent to reprioritise based on the volume of work, in order to avoid risk of overloading. **It was agreed** that this would be reviewed in tandem with the next budget round and also the mid-term review of *Inspiring Futures* (**Action: IB/DMA/SM**).

**8 Audit and Risk Committee**

It was reported that the recent committee meeting had focused on three main areas: the internal audit update, SMG's ICT strategy and the SMG Health and Safety Report.

*Brian Cantor left the meeting.*

**8.1 SMG Health and Safety Report**

The paper that had been circulated previously was noted. The Audit and Risk Committee had been updated on a recent health and safety issue involving Chain Bridge Honey Farm; the Health and Safety Executive had been notified and SMG was conducting its own internal investigation.

**9 Board of Survey Recommendations**

9.1 The paper that had been circulated previously was noted. It was also noted that the cost of the Eurostar object (accession number 2019-359, Appendix 2 to Director's Report) was listed incorrectly.

9.2 **The Board approved** the recommendations.

**10 Minutes and reports from SMG Board sub-committees and working groups**

The paper that had been circulated previously was noted.

**11 AOB**

11.1 It was noted that SMG trustee, Russell Foster, would feature in an upcoming episode of Radio 4's *Desert Island Discs*.

11.2 It was noted that Sian Thompson, Board Secretary, would be going on maternity leave in January 2020 and would be replaced by Lacie Southon.

Signed by Chair: *Mary Archer*

Date: *4 March 2020*