

SCIENCE MUSEUM GROUP

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Meeting on Wednesday 11 October 2017, 09:00-14:30, The Kings Head Hotel, Cirencester

Present:

Dame Mary Archer (Chairman)
Lord Faulkner of Worcester
Ms Sharon Flood
Mr Matt d'Ancona
Lord Grade of Yarmouth (until 13:00)
Mr Andreas Goss
Professor Ludmilla Jordanova
Mr Simon Linnett
Ms Lopa Patel
Mr Anton Valk
Dame Fiona Woolf
Dr Sarah Dry
Professor Russell Foster
Professor David Phoenix
Lord Willetts of Havant

In Attendance:

Mr Ian Blatchford	Director, SMG
Mr Jonathan Newby	Deputy Director and COO, SMG
Ms Jane Ellis	Director of Corporate Services
Dr Roger Highfield	Director of External Affairs
Ms Penny Canepa-Anson	Acting Director of Development
Ms Karen Livingstone	Director of Masterplan and Estate
Ms Sally MacDonald	Director, MSI
Ms Jo Quinton-Tulloch	Director, NSMM
Ms Judith McNicol	Acting Director, NRM and Director of People and Culture, SMG
Mr John Stack	Digital Director
Ms Helen Jones	Director of Strategy and International
Ms Linda Kilroy	Estates Director
Ms Sian Thompson	Board Secretary

ACTION

BT 10/17 1. **Welcome and Introduction to Strategy Day**

- 1.1 Participants were welcomed. Apologies had been received from Professor Brian Cantor.
- 1.2 A brief overview of progress against '*Inspiring Futures: Strategic Priorities 2017:2030*' was given. It was noted that many discussions that had taken place at the previous Strategy Day had helped to shape and inform the new Group strategy.
- 1.3 A shortened version of '*Inspiring Futures*' was tabled at the meeting; several versions of the publication were in production and these would be tailored to various audiences. Trustees would receive copies of each in due course as well as a set of slides outlining key messages.

BT 10/17 2. **Horizon Scanning: UK Political Environment**

- 2.1 Feedback was given from each of the Party Conferences by trustees who had recently attended. Key emerging themes included Brexit (and the strengthening of links inside and outside the EU), soft power connections, adult education and the skills agenda, industrial strategy, digital and innovative technologies and the Autumn budget.
- 2.2 It was noted that economic pressure could result in a disappointing budget settlement for SMG's Ministerial department (DCMS), and this in turn would have financial implications for SMG.
- 2.3 It was noted that this was a historic moment in the UK political scene, not least due to the uncertainties and unpredictability of a Government Brexit deal, and as such it would be sensible for SMG to take a utilitarian approach to promoting its agenda, purpose and plans with key players across the political spectrum.

BT 10/17 3. **The Limits of Respectability?: Science and Pseudo-Science in the Digital Era**

- 3.1 The paper that had been circulated previously was noted. In addition:
 - There was a strength of feeling among some of those present regarding the threat that pseudoscience presented to society;

- SMG was often required to consider its role in the wider science communication ecosystem, not least in relation to the public events and cultural programmes at each of its sites;
- A recent event scheduled as part of the '*Illuminating India*' programme at SM had prompted some public controversy, mostly within the science sector, and critics had been particularly active on social media;
- Whilst SMG had a duty to engage in public debate as an outward-facing and inclusive institution, it was best to do this via a strategy of selective engagement with difficult issues, to build public trust rather than adopting a 'no platform' stance;
- It was not the role of SMG to get involved in ontological questions regarding what constituted 'belief', or to be particularly proactive about engaging with pseudo-scientists for the sake of debate, with decisions around engagement always linking back to SMG's cultural programme;
- It was important not to be too prescriptive about the type of events that SMG hosted or chose to be involved in, instead putting more investment into being as agile as possible in the way events were handled on a case-by-case basis in terms of their merits and ethics;
- SMG had to accept that there would always be an element of risk with any public events programme, since it was not able to control how certain events might be reported or promoted externally.
- It was recognised that the immediacy of social media was an inherent part of online engagement in an increasingly digital era, and debates could often move at speed;
- It was generally felt that SMG should continue with its current approach of 'flexible activism' when dealing with events tackling pseudo-science, rather than instituting a formal code or policy; but should always champion a rational, objective, evidence-based scientific viewpoint, and take reasonable action to rebut pseudoscience when appropriate opportunities arose.

BT 10/17 4. **Wroughton Masterplan and One Collection Facility**

4.1 A presentation was given, and the following points were noted:

- It was noted that the majority of attendees at the Strategy Day had attended a site tour of Wroughton the previous day;
- There was enormous potential to develop the Wroughton site and SMG had worked with sector-leading experts in masterplanning to develop its plans;
- The current leading option was a campus-style development from which it was hoped various commercial opportunities could be leveraged, as well as attracting other organisations as tenants. The site also presented options to develop exciting on-site initiatives such as large battery storage and site transport (e.g. autonomous electric vehicles) and conversations were underway to investigate these opportunities;
- SMG was adopting the position that the new building facility (National Collection Centre) would become the solution for the reserve collection; however, it would not solve SMG's storage issues overall;
- The new building facility was being approached with full consideration of future expansion.

BT 10/17 5. **National Railway Museum: The Way Ahead**

5.1 A presentation was given which outlined immediate priorities for NRM, and the following points were noted:

- The interim Director had been in post for 10 weeks and had made a hugely positive impact during this time, especially in terms of nurturing external stakeholder relationships and maintaining momentum on key projects (e.g. Great Hall and Wonderlab, York Central development);
- Regarding NRM's purpose and general content, there was a need for NRM to bestride contemporary trends in railway technologies, engineering and STEM as well as providing testament to the important history of the railways;
- The main priorities for the interim Director would be to readdress the Museum's core offer, build morale and capacity within the senior team and provide clear leadership over NRM's Masterplan projects;
- The Director, NRM was commended for her vision and progress made to date.

BT 10/17 6. **Future of Locomotion**

6.1 A presentation was given which outlined immediate priorities for Locomotion, and the following points were noted:

- Ongoing works to fully integrate *Locomotion* into the Group would continue over the next few months: immediate actions included stabilising the estate through the conservation of historic buildings, improving the overall presentation of the site as well as the customer offer (e.g. wayfinding, branding, refreshing the café, etc.), and the institution of a new Advisory Board;
- There was a need for SMG to work closely with stakeholders within the community – including Durham County Council as the main partner – to build relationships and nurture a sense of local ownership over Locomotion, whilst refocusing on the heritage of Shildon as the 'first railway town';
- SMG would reintroduce expert informal learning to *Locomotion*, and various opportunities for digitisation projects were also being explored;
- Collections management and storage facility options were also being reviewed in relation to the Locomotion site.

BT 10/17 7. **SMG Digital Strategy**

7.1 A presentation was given, and the following points were noted:

- The Digital Strategy 2015-17 had centred around the following themes: experience, culture, collection, narrative content and infrastructure;
- The website relaunch project had launched successfully in tandem with the Group rebranding project, and had met many of the objectives laid out in the 2015-17 strategy;
- The next phase of the Digital Strategy would cover the period from 2018-2021 and would pull out key threads from discussions held by the Digital Advisory Board as well as ongoing conversations between the Digital Director and SMG colleagues;
- The 2018-21 strategy would be discussed at a future Board meeting, likely in March 2018.

JS / ST

BT 10/17 8. **SMG Brand Project** (*discussed in place of agenda item 11*)

8.1 A presentation was given, and the following points were noted:

- Good progress had been made on the project since last year's Strategy Day, both in terms of updating the visual identity for NSMM, SM and SMG, and instilling the new mission and values across the Group;
- The new Science Museum visual identity had successfully launched with the opening of the *Illuminating India* exhibition;
- Various visual elements of the rebrand such as (wayfinding, signage, visual language, etc.) continued to be implemented as part of a phased rollout across the Group;
- The project would reach completion during the course of 2018.

BT 10/17 9. **Strategic Risk Register**

9.1 The paper that had been circulated previously was noted. It was noted that the register

was reflective of discussions that had taken place part of the Strategy Day agenda.

- 9.2 SMG managed its risk appetite through a Corporate Risk Group (CRG), which reported to the Group Executive and to the Audit and Risk Committee. The ARC considered that the risks on the strategic register in the red area of the heat map should be escalated to Board level.
- 9.3 The top risks related to the impact of historic under-investment in the physical and digital estate; statutory compliance (especially estates management); operational capacity to deliver; financial sustainability and collections management. It was noted that, while many of these risks were inherent the nature of SMG's business, clear mitigating actions were in place and therefore it was assumed that the level of residual risk would decrease over time.
- 9.4 A discussion was had regarding operational capacity; it was generally felt that this would need to be closely monitored in relation to SMG's level of ambition and creating a stable structure over the longer-term. It was agreed that an appropriate forum for updating the Board on People and Culture strategy (including workforce KPIs) would be discussed by the management team.
- 9.5 **It was agreed** that the Board of Trustees (specifically trustee recruitment) would be added to the risk register under succession planning (ID. HR 1).

**IB / JN /
JMcN**

JE

- BT 10/17 10. **Income Advisory Board: Progress and Plans** (*discussed in place of agenda item 8*)
- 10.1 An overview of the discussions and activities of the Income Advisory Board was given to date; noting that the group was coming to the end of its first year of operation.
- 10.2 The focus of the group was to investigate ways of generating self-sustaining income, and to advise on the development of an income strategy for SMG. Membership of the IAB was purposely comprised of a broad range of SMG staff, to encourage a wider responsibility for revenue generation within all teams and departments across the Group.
- 10.3 Discussions to date had included: encouraging a greater strategic alliance between the Commercial and Masterplan teams; enacting cultural change across the organisation in how SMG viewed income generation; and improving the overall visitor experience to drive spend per head on the museum floor.

- BT 10/17 11. **Session summary and overview of Strategy Day**
- 11.1 A brief overview was given of the themes discussed during the Strategy Day. All participants were invited to offer feedback to the Chairman or Board Secretary, which would be followed up outside of the meeting.

ST

ST 22/11/2017

Signed: _____ SMG Chairman

Date: _____