



Board of Trustees

Minutes

Date: 28 January 2021

Time: 14.00-16.30

Venue: Via video conference

Present: Nicholas Coleridge CBE, Chair
Martin Bartle
Allegra Berman
Dr David Bomford
Dr Genevieve Davies
Ben Elliot
Nick Hoffman
Amanda Leveté CBE

Professor Lynda Nead
Kavita Puri
Caroline Silver
Amanda Spielman
Marc St John
Dr Paul Thompson
Nigel Webb
Anthony Misquitta (*Secretary to the Board & General Counsel*)

In attendance Dr Tristram Hunt, Director
Dr Antonia Boström, Director of Collections
Sophie Brendel, Director of Audiences, Commercial & Digital
Dr Gus Casely-Hayford OBE, Director of V&A East
Dr Helen Charman, Director of Learning & National Programmes
Jane Ellis, Director of Finance & Resources
Jane Lawson, Director of Development
Tim Reeve, Deputy Director & Chief Operating Officer
Judy Roberts, Director of People & Change
Dr Pip Simpson, Director of Design, Estate & Public Programmes
Jo Norman, Director of the V&A Research Institute, for item 8.

Apologies: Jonathan Anderson

Minute taker: Julia Downer, Directorate Office Manager & Governance Officer

1. Welcome and Declarations of Interests

- 1.1 Nicholas Coleridge welcomed Trustees to the meeting.
- 1.2 There were no declarations of interest in the agenda.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

- 2.1 The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 27 November 2020, and the Confidential Annex relating to that meeting, were approved by the Board.

3. Matters Arising

- 3.1 The reappointment of three Trustees has been confirmed by the Prime Minister: Nigel Webb and Ben Elliot for four years, and Professor Lynda Nead for two years.

4. Director's Report

- 4.1 Tristram Hunt, Director, briefed the Trustees on the activities of the museum.
- 4.2 Following the end of the second lockdown the museum had reopened all galleries, some of which had been refurbished, with an expanded visitor provision, and an increased Covid-secure capacity. The exhibition, *Bags: Inside Out*, opened to the public with very positive press reviews. However, with the introduction of Tier 3 restrictions followed by the national lockdown the museum closed again. V&A Dundee and the V&A Collection at World of Wedgwood have also closed.
- 4.3 Together with representatives from other leading cultural institutions, the Director and Chair had participated in a telephone meeting with the Secretary of State to present the case for Government support during the pandemic and its aftermath. It is expected that a financial settlement will be announced in March 2021.
- 4.4 The Trustees were briefed on the restructuring of the Executive Board which has arisen as part of the recovery programme taking place across all areas of the museum. Alex Stitt, formerly Director of Commercial, Digital and Exhibitions, has decided to leave the V&A under the voluntary options scheme after seven very successful years; the Board recorded its thanks for his excellent work which has included driving forward significant commercial and publishing projects. A new division, Audiences, Commercial and Digital, has been created and will be led by Sophie Brendel. Dr Philippa Simpson will become Director of Design, Estate and Public Programme, with oversight of exhibitions.
- 4.5 The Director updated the Board on recent announcements around the public programme, which include the BBC's second series of *Secrets of the Museum* which will be broadcast later in 2021. The Raphael Court has been refurbished and the Raphael Cartoons have been relaunched digitally through the work of the Interpretation Department. A future exhibition *Africa Fashion* has been launched ahead of opening in June 2022.
- 4.6 It has been announced that the museum has been awarded a grant of £2.3m by UK Research and Innovation to fund a major redevelopment of the science laboratory, expanding its cutting edge multi-disciplinary research.
- 4.7 The V&A has established an Anti-Racism Taskforce to shape and progress anti-racism initiatives across the museum within the broader context of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.
- Action Point:** The Trustees will receive a full briefing on the V&A's work around Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at a future meeting.
- 4.8 The Trustees discussed the museum's programmes to support parents, teachers and students in Key Stage 3 and upwards during lockdown. The provision has been expanded over the past ten months to include digital initiatives for a wide range of activities for

families alongside established educational programmes such as Innovate and DesignLab Nation. The museum offers highly regarded continuing professional development for teachers of design and technology.

Action Point: The Board asked for a briefing on the digital work of the V&A at a future meeting.

5. Finance

5.1 Financial Report

This item has been recorded under a Confidential Annex. Its contents are exempt from disclosure under S.(43)2 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 because publication would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of the V&A and its supply chain.

6. Recovery Programme Update

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7. V&A East Update

7.1 Tim Reeve updated the Board on the recent progress made at V&A East. The estimated opening dates were set out and will be evaluated at the forthcoming Trustees' Building Strategy Committee, ahead of a full briefing to the Board in March. The Trustees viewed recent images of the V&A East construction sites and projects elsewhere in the Olympic Park.

7.2 A letter setting out the commitment of the Partners to the East Bank development, coordinated by the V&A, had been sent to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

7.3 The Trustees were briefed on the East Bank Masterplan which will embed the Olympic legacy through residential, commercial and community developments. In particular, the work underway at Hackney Bridge, a creative district adjacent to the V&A's Collection and Research Centre, where the Good Growth Hub will be located, will provide new opportunities for synergy and partnership.

8. Research Strategy & Delivery Plan

8.1 Jo Norman Director of the V&A Research Institute (VARI) joined the meeting.

8.2 The Trustees received a briefing on the origins and work of the VARI. The museum has Independent Research Organisation status which puts it on a par with higher education institutions in terms of attainment and activities, as well as enabling applications for funding for research, postgraduate training, including the PhD and the MA Programme offered in conjunction with the Royal College of Arts. The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

is a notable supporter, facilitating research into the collections as well as innovative partnerships around V&A East.

8.3 The benefits for the museum are significant, reflecting the wide focus of research undertaken; in addition to developing staff expertise in academic and practical fields, it augments the museum's external presence and significant scholarly reputation.

8.4 The future focus of VARI will include increased use of digital scholarship to enlarge the V&A's community of researchers, bringing together partner organisations nationally and internationally and taking forward innovative programmes. Projects include investigating the legacies of empire such as sources of wealth, how the museum's collections are shared with audiences, and collaboration with V&A East including work with residency programmes. Work is ongoing to maintain the pipeline of major grant applications supporting research programmes, events and outputs.

9. Development Update

9.1 Jane Lawson, Director of Development, updated the Board on recent development activities.

9.2 The Trustees were briefed on the membership programme and the benefits it brings to the museum, including deepening engagement with audiences and income generation. Prior to the pandemic membership levels had been at all-time high, boosted by the popular exhibitions: *Christian Dior: Designer of Dreams* and *Frida Kahlo: Making Herself Up*. Since March 2020 membership levels have decreased with the closure of the museum, however digital engagement has been successful with a wide range of online events produced in conjunction with departments across the museum; some online talks have brought c. 700 attendees from across the UK and further afield, which would not have been possible with physical events. Opportunities to strengthen further the offer for members are being taken forward.

10. Chairman's Report

10.1 The Chair summarised the current situation for the Board, emphasising the considerable work on recovery planning, which, whilst challenging for the V&A, will enable it to flourish in the future.

11. Any other business

11.1 The next meeting is scheduled for 23 March 2021.

11.2 There was no further business.

12. Reports from Committees

12.1 **Trustees' Audit Committee:** The minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2020 had been circulated in advance.

- 12.2 **Trustees' Collections Committee:** The minutes of the meeting held on 09 December 2020 had been circulated in advance.
- 12.3 **Trustees' Museum of Childhood Committee:** The minutes of the meetings held on 16 November 2020 had been circulated in advance.
- 12.4 **Trustees' V&A East Committee:** The minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2020 had been circulated in advance.
- 12.5 **Trustees' Visitor Experience Committee:** The minutes of the meeting held on 8 December had been circulated in advance.
- 12.6 **Trustees' Research Committee:** The minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2020 had been circulated in advance.

Julia Downer
28 January 2021

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Signed
Nicholas Coleridge, Chair