



Board of Trustees

Minutes

VABT(21)53

Date: 20 September 2021

Time: 13.20-16.20

Venue: Lynn Boardroom, Plexal, QE Olympic Park, London E20 3BS

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
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
Claire McKeown, V&A East Project Director, for item 7.

Apologies: Jonathan Anderson
Caroline Silver

Minute taker: Mary Witton – Assistant to Directorate

1. Welcome and Declarations of Interests

1.1 Nicholas Coleridge welcomed Trustees to the meeting. Prior to the meeting Trustees had made tours of the progress at V&A East Storehouse and V&A East Museum, as well as receiving an introduction to the area and local priorities by the Good Growth Hub management, 'A New Direction' at their Hackney Bridge site.

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 29 June 2021 were approved by the Board.

3. Matters Arising

- 3.1 There were no matters arising.

4. Director's Report

- 4.1 The Trustees received a briefing from the Director on the activities of the museum since 9 June 2021.
- 4.2 The success of the Raphael Gallery was noted and the positive feedback and good visitor numbers for *Epic Iran* which were felt to evidence the public's continuing appetite for scholarly exhibitions alongside the high impact shows. It was felt that the public programme announced for the next three years held the right balance of academic and popular subjects with both areas being approached in a scholarly, researched and intellectually stimulating way.
- 4.3 Staff wellbeing was discussed and the Director reported that morale was felt to be high. The Museum had resumed hiring, more staff were working onsite and there were consequently more touch points for staff to interact and collaborate. There was a new energy which would be self-sustaining as visitor numbers and impact increased.
- 4.4 The issue of a return to 7-day opening was considered. It was agreed that 5-day opening would remain for this financial year whilst modelling work would be done on the impacts of 6-day or 7-day opening and the mood and appetite of visitors. This would also be considered in the context of the budget round and comparators in the sector.
- 4.5 Pre-bookable tickets would remain through the winter to cover the establishment of the new e-commerce platform. Promotion of walk-ups and greater capacity would begin with new messaging communications plans alongside engagement plans with the local community and supporters. The Cromwell Road doors would be replaced in February 2022 and this would be an opportunity to adopt and establish new systems.
- 4.6 The ongoing priority of ensuring objects from the Collections were accessible widely across the country was raised and the Trustees re-emphasised their commitment to the regions.

5. Finance & Resources Report

- 5.1 The Trustees received a briefing from Jane Ellis, Director of Finance and Resources, on the financial position and developments since 9 June 2021.
- 5.2 Visitor numbers had been higher than expected over the summer resulting in a welcome improvement in self-generated income over budget. Budgeting had been cautious during the pandemic and the Museum was now looking at projects that could be completed in the current year. The Government had provided bailout funding for the current financial year which would not be available for future years when the Museum would still be building back memberships and visitor numbers to pre-pandemic levels. Care was therefore needed to invest in-year and identify necessary projects which could be brought forward from

future years to manage the financial flow. Bailout funding would be drawn down as necessary towards the close of the year.

- 5.3 The Museum would work closely with DCMS to ensure fair and transparent in-year investment whilst minimising exposure to future uncertainties and reduced visitor and membership figures.
- 5.4 The result of the Spending Review would be known in November and the Museum was expecting a flat cash settlement over the three-year term. Next year would be challenging as the impact of the pandemic was still being felt but a more stable situation was expected in 2023-24.
- 5.5 It was noted that the Museum's reserves were currently below the level agreed with DCMS and funding would be required to return these to the acceptable figure.

6. Remobilisation Update

- 6.1 Tim Reeve, Deputy Director and Chief Operating Officer, briefed the Board on the remobilisation activities taking place across the organisation.
- 6.2 Staff, including visitor facing employees, were being encouraged to get vaccinated, however there was no penalty for those who chose not to be and no data had been collected.
- 6.3 Gallery staffing, which had been negatively affected by illness and the 'pingdemic', was returning to normal and there was less pressure being felt by the team. Improvements were apparent week by week and all galleries were now open when required. The Museum was aware that this could still change very quickly and contingency plans and mitigations were in place. A resumption of normal schedules was expected next year.
- 6.4 It was noted that staff attitudes to working on site and hybrid working were varied. A system of requiring 40% onsite working was currently being trialled and feedback would be evaluated. Certain roles needed to be onsite and these would be made clear.

7. V&A East Update

- 7.1 Claire McKeown, V&A East Project Director, presented an update on progress at the two V&A East sites.
- 7.2 Good progress continued with the steel frame at the Waterfront Museum which was now beyond the level 2 slab. Work was currently 4 weeks ahead of the revised programme. Images showing recent advancements at the Waterfront Museum were shared with the Trustees.
- 7.3 The V&A East Storehouse continued to have procurement and resource challenges which were being monitored closely. The Contractor Management Team had been changed in August due to poor performance over the summer. Work was being done to establish project tolerances of further slippage in the schedule but the Collections Move date could still be met.

7. **Annual Safety Report**

8.1 Tim Reeve, Deputy Director and Chief Operating Officer, requested the Board's approval of the Annual Safety Report.

8.2 A reduction in visitor numbers had had a corresponding impact on accident instances.

8.3 The focus for the year had been on managing Covid amongst onsite staff and visitors and implementing new measures in line with Government guidance. An internal audit on the activity had highlighted two challenges that would be considered at the forthcoming Audit Committee.

8.4 Mental health and wellbeing for staff had been a priority over the year. The Museum had stepped up resources in this area with access to wellbeing programmes both on the intranet and external sites. Front of House staff had access to an NHS Wellbeing programme. A set of measures had been introduced to ensure areas were covid-secure, including an end to ticket scanning. New procedures had been put in place around the reporting of illness.

Action: JR to circulate data on illness trends

8.4 The Board approved the 2020 Annual Safety Report

9. **Public programme**

9.1 Tristram Hunt, Director of the V&A, presented the public programme for the next three years.

The content and quality of the programme were warmly received by the Board and the balance of scholarship and high impact exhibitions commended. The Board encouraged the Museum to push boundaries in identifying areas for exhibition potential. New and innovative ways to present the strongly researched content in both academic and high impact exhibitions, should be explored to keep the museum as a leader in this field.

10. **V&A Strategy**

10.1 Tim Reeve, Deputy Director and COO, presented the framework for the new V&A Strategy.

10.2 It was noted by the Board that the strategy was defined within a 3-year horizon to mirror the term of the spending review and respond to the current period of change.

10.3 The need to ensure that the Museum remained current, relevant, accessible and open to all audiences was emphasized.

10.4 A leading role would be assumed on areas of cultural complexity.

10.5 Design would be championed both digitally and onsite. Digital outreach would run in conjunction with physical outreach working symbiotically to inspire creative confidence in audiences.

10.6 The Board approved the draft V&A Strategy as the right direction of travel

11. Audiences Strategy

11.1 Sophie Brendel, Director of Audiences, Commercial & Digital, presented the Audiences Strategy.

11.2 The Board noted the good work being done in this area and the response being made to the new opportunities of the post-covid times.

11.3 Membership targets were discussed and the different membership models that would be necessary to address the requirements of the new family of Museums becoming a reality from next year.

11.3 The opportunities for championing creativity in all its forms presented by the opening of the V&A East Storehouse, the V&A East Museum and Young V&A were noted. Engagement with digital and creative technology in these areas would be key.

12. Chairman's Report

12.1 On behalf of the Board of Trustees, Nicholas Coleridge thanked the Executive Board for seeing through the pandemic with focus and resilience. The difficult times of staff reductions were in the past and the emphasis would now be on restoring the 4.4m visitor numbers whilst not compromising the high standards of our role and scholarship.

13. Any other business

13.2 The next meeting is scheduled for 24 November 2021.

13.3 There was no further business.

14. Reports from Committees

14.1 **Trustees' Research Committee:** The minutes of the meeting held on 12 July 2021 had been circulated in advance.

14.2 **Trustees Audiences and Commercial Strategy Committee:** The minutes of the meetings held on 17 August 2021 had been circulated in advance.

 Date: 24th November 2021
Signed
Nicholas Coleridge, Chair