

HORNIMAN PUBLIC MUSEUM AND PUBLIC PARK TRUST

Notes of the Board meeting of the Horniman Public Museum and Public Park Trust held on Thursday 23 April 2020 at the Horniman Museum and Gardens.

This meeting was held virtually via Zoom conferencing.

Present

Eve Salomon
Caroline Cole
Geoff Crossick
Bunt Ghosh

Simon Hesketh
Nico Iacuzzi
Sarah Kemp
Mayowa Ochere

Nick Merriman (Chief Executive)
Paula Thomas (Board Secretary, Finance Director)
Victoria Pinnington (Director, Communications and Income Generation)
Tim Corum (Director, Curatorial and Public Engagement)
Kirsten Walker (Director, Collections Care and Estates)

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Helen Williams, Carole Souter and Clare Matterson

2. Notes of last meeting

The notes of the meeting on 9 April 2020 were agreed. All matters arising are covered elsewhere on the agenda.

3. Café update

(Nico Iacuzzi left the meeting after this item)

4. Furlough update

The CEO reported that after various discussions between the ALBs and DCMS, including legal advice taken by both the British Museum and DCMS, it had been agreed that ALBs could furlough staff and top up by 20% as long as they could demonstrate that this was funded from self-generated income and not public funding.

SMT had agreed a list of approximately 50 staff and were in the process of developing communications with staff.

Concern was expressed as to whether there might be any resentment from those staff working that those on furlough were receiving the top-up, but the CEO confirmed that all museums were topping up to 100% and so far there had been no adverse comments. Trustees had agreed at the last meeting that staff should be furloughed on full pay as many of these were the lower pay and a cut of 20% would take them below the LLW and would look bad as well as leading to problems agreeing it with the union. The cost of the top up for three months will be approx. £60k which will be met from reserves.

Communications will include a list of Q&As which provide further information to staff including what they can and can't do whilst on furlough, including encouraging them to volunteer (but not for the Horniman).

5. Financial update

The Finance Director reported that no work had yet been done on scenarios other than the 3 month and 6 month closure forecast presented at the last meeting.

The first draft of the management accounts for 2019/20 shows a positive position of c£90k on unrestricted reserves. Income held up well despite closure for the final two weeks and expenditure was below budget due to some works not being able to be carried out due to closure. This result is subject to adjustments. Although DCMS have deferred their accounts publication date to September they are asking ALBs to stick to their audit and accounts timetable as far as possible. Draft accounts are due with DCMS by 1 June. The audit is due to take place mid-May but there will be some tasks which the auditors won't be able to carry out until they can get access on site e.g. stock take, invoice verification. Therefore the accounts will be subject to any final audit adjustments. Approval of the accounts by the Board will probably need to be deferred. This will be discussed with the Chair of the Audit Committee.

6. SMT updates

Curatorial and Public Engagement (Tim)

Overall the team is feeling positive and continuing to communicate well. There have been no concerns over furlough other than they are keen to see it resolved.

- Music – the Curator is getting on with dealing with the backlog and the Deputy Curator is working on the Dolmetsch bid although her time on this is limited as her husband is seriously ill.
- Anthropology are continuing to develop the programme around African collections, in particular the DDF programme in relation to community research, which they are reworking in a digital format.
- Natural History are working on the future programme in relation to the Nature space.
- The Aquarium team are continuing to go in to look after the livestock. Jamie has done an interview with the Economist and is scheduled to do some live streaming with the BBC.
- Learning have been busy but are now winding down for furloughing. They have been looking at the safeguarding protocols around digital interactions.
- Programming have been working with external partners re winding down the summer programme.

On a personal level Tim informed trustees that he had decided to leave on 12 June. He would be continuing to work in the sector but wanted to do it in a different way. Trustees wished him well for the future.

Collections Management and Estates (Kirsten)

The teams are all good and morale is high.

- Garden staff are still onsite and keeping the Gardens open. They have developed a good system and are not having any problems closing or with social distancing.
- Estates – the staff who were on sick leave are now back at work and the amended rota is working well. M&E contractors are coming in twice a week to ensure the systems are ok. The Head of Estates and Estates Manager are each coming in one day a week. A smaller team of cleaners is cleaning the essential areas.

- SCC – the Collections Management and Knowledge Information Management teams are getting on with work and someone is going in two days a week to ensure that everything is ok.
- Conservation are developing training materials and doing research.
- The new Exhibitions Manager is getting to grips with future exhibition plans and in developing the soft play area. Management have been starting to think that some staff could come in to work as they work in large spaces and it is difficult to do some work remotely. Some of the team live locally or have their own transport.

The Chair asked if with the warmer and longer evenings management have considered opening the Gardens for longer. Kirsten commented that it would stretch the Gardens team and would disrupt the work pattern that is currently working well, however it will be discussed with the Head of Horticulture. At the moment visitors just seem to be happy that it's open at all.

Finance (Paula)

The teams are all well and working fairly normally remotely.

- IT are still dealing with connection issues and related helpdesk tickets. However the number of staff with outstanding connection issues is reducing and remote access has generally improved. Now that some staff are being furloughed this should enable all staff who need them to have access to a laptop.
- HR have been very busy with the furlough lists and communications in conjunction with SMT and CIG.
- Finance are busy with the year end accounts, payroll and usual finance operations. Procedures have been adapted to working remotely and are working well.

Communications and Income Generation (Victoria)

All the team are well and morale is generally high, although a couple of individuals are up and down so are being kept an eye on. A chunk of the team is being put on furlough i.e. Retail and Admissions and Visitor Hosts, but they are all comfortable with the prospect as are those who are still working.

- Fundraising are planning to launch an appeal soon on the back of the positive response received so far.
- There have been approximately 880 membership cancellations to date. This is about 10% and in line with what was expected. Members are being offered extensions first.
- Some of the team have been redeployed to Digital to help with delivery of digital content and finalisation of the website. Snagging needs to be completed by 5 May.

The final visitor figures for 2019/20 were 908k, 3.5% down on last year but encouraging as the museum was closed from 18 March. There has been a positive response to the Gardens remaining open and visits of 26k were recorded in March.

CEO

SMT have started to do some planning on returning to work. This is likely to be a staged approach and will start with those staff who are seen to be part of the

statutory duty in respect of the collections. Office staff would be considered next when appropriate arrangements have been agreed and can be put in place for social distancing e.g. shift working. Some staff wouldn't return to work until the museum is open to the public.

DCMS is responsible for a group looking at when Recreational Activities can be resumed. This includes museums. They are looking at what this might mean e.g. screens, face masks, cleaning, social distancing etc. It is estimated that it would take approximately three weeks to reopen once the go ahead is given. We would need to look at limiting visitor numbers by, for example, issuing timed tickets or some other form of spreading people out.

7. Presence in Lewisham Town Centre

The CEO provided an update on the approach received from SEW to be part of a development scheme for Lewisham Town Centre.

After the current crisis it is impossible to know what future capital funding will be available either from DCMS or other funders. The CSR has been delayed for another year and the NHLF has rejected our application for Nature and Love as it is now concentrating on emergency funding to the sector.

For this reason the Lewisham option is worth keeping under consideration. A meeting was held with Landsec at which the Horniman's requirements were presented. Part of this was the condition for a separate collections store as well as a space in the town centre. It had been agreed that Nick and Kirsten would work up specifications for an exhibition space as well as a larger arts centre. This would probably need to be in partnership with others and if so would need a separate body set up. It would also need a substantial revenue stream to make it work as it is unlikely that it would be a charged for space.

Trustees asked if there were any other similar models out there. Tate St Ives and Liverpool and HOME Manchester were given as examples of different models. It was suggested that there could be a possibility of having a higher education or further education partner in the mix. A new body originally funded by Lewisham Council and moving to NPO status is a possible model.

The trustees agreed that this sounded like an exciting project and suggested that the Horniman provides creative input in the development with Lewisham.

8. AOB and next steps

The trustees noted that the urgency of getting some things done in the Strategic Plan had diminished as for example visitor numbers were not likely to return to previous levels for some time. The CEO reported that the SMT were holding an away half day on 13 May to consider various scenarios.

There was no other business. The Board agreed to meet again in four weeks' time. A date of 20th May was subsequently agreed.