

Minutes of the Board of Trustees Meeting

Wednesday 15 April 2020: Due to the COVID-19 restrictions, this meeting was held electronically between 10.00 and 16.00

Trustees participating - Margaret Knight (MK), Derek Knight (DK), Robert Guyver (RG), Henry French (HF), Geoff Roberts (GR), Sandra Bond (SB), Shane Cormie (SC), John Reeves (JR), Christopher Chanter, Richard Templeton

Staff participating - Emma Dunn (ED), Emma Laws (EL)

Pt 1 Meeting: There were no items for a Pt 1 discussion

Pt 2 Meeting

MK introduced the virtual meeting and noted that all the DEI staff continue to work to ensure that the DEI continues to deliver its charitable objects even though the building is closed. Due to good planning, leadership and forethought they are powering ahead with plans for delivery of the NLHF project and in addition we are becoming sector leaders in offering a 'Virtual' service.

1. **Minutes of the last meeting on 22 January 2020** - were agreed

2. **Matters arising**

Item 6 – Cottage Business rates: No action is needed at present to transfer from domestic to business rates as DK has established that the DEI, as an educational charity, qualifies for a one-year domestic rating exemption for vacant premises.

3. **Hon Secretary's Report: DK**

DK confirmed that the new staffing structure was now in place.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the DEI was closed to members from 1.00pm on Monday 16 March. Staff have been working from home since Tue 24 March. Cleaning contracts have been suspended and a 24-hr intruder alarm keyholding service is in operation.

ED noted that the staff team would like the trustees to know that most events are carrying on as programmed, but in a virtual form

- The Saturday programme is running as programmed and so are the schools' sessions and Bookworms club
- We have the Books in Isolation blog in place of the lecture programme. We also have one or two speakers who are willing to stream talks in future
- Wednesday tours have gone online
- Member led groups - Cinema Club, West Q research, Film club and Reading group have gone virtual and are now supported by a discussion forum
- The past exhibition programme is available as downloadable pdfs - there is a virtual gallery for response works and the new display will be available online soon
- The Our Region Revealed project is running to schedule
- The NLHF project is established and running slightly ahead of schedule

SB noted that the member's summer outing to Tavistock has been provisionally rescheduled for 25 September

4. Hon. Treasurer's report: JR

The Budget and Membership reports were received. JR noted that some coding errors in the budget report needed to be corrected. ED noted that staff have been keeping the Membership Secretaries informed of our activities, so that they may direct members to our website and other resources. We are finding that a lot of members are popping up on Facebook and twitter, so it is a case of finding new ways to connect, which may also be beneficial in the long term.

JR

Subscription sensitivity analysis: The recommendations in the report were approved with the proviso that any offer of an extension on membership should be considered when the availability of receiving 5 additional funding to cover the likely cost is known. MK circulated a draft letter from the Chair to accompany membership renewal reminders. It was agreed to:

- Send this letter to the Membership Secretaries to use for April renewal reminders
- Task the Leadership Team with investigating additional funding support from the NLHF and/or the government grant of £10k for Charities and the business rate relief process
- Introduce a card payment facility, to be available when the DEI reopens, to facilitate membership and other income streams

During the meeting ED identified the criteria for NLHF funding support which is:

What will we fund?

The Heritage Emergency Fund is short-term funding to support the immediate actions needed to stabilise operations and manage unforeseen risks. You can apply to us for a grant between £3,000 and £50,000 to cover unavoidable costs you will otherwise be unable to meet for up to four months. You should only apply to us for essential costs. Partnership funding is not required.

We want to support organisations to actively deal with immediate risks, to help you become more stable, so you can work towards longer term recovery and (if applicable) revised delivery plans for your projects.

As a guide you could apply to us for costs to:

- *stabilise your organisation in the immediate term to make sure the vital heritage you care for is not put further at risk by COVID-19 (for example, staff costs to allow you to respond, design and deliver plans)*
- *help you plan and initiate mothballing of (putting aside or withdrawing from use) your heritage asset/s and other approaches to protecting heritage that is at risk*
- *run immediate risk management reviews and the actions identified as needed to safe-guard your organisation*
- *reconfigure business plans, governance and activity needed to help safeguard the future of your organisation*
- *cover essential operational costs, for example, site security, maintaining climatic conditions for collections, or managing livestock on habitats*

What won't we fund?

- *costs that are eligible to be covered by Government support, for example, furloughing*
- *the remaining 20% salary costs for staff on furlough or any additional salary costs above the furloughing costs*
- *redundancy costs of staff not funded by a current National Lottery Heritage Fund project*
- *costs that are avoidable in the short term. We will let you know if we think this is the case and remove these from your grant request.*
- *costs you will incur beyond four months from the point of your application.*
- *anything that contravenes Governments' advice on COVID-19.*

5. Directors' report:

It was noted that the staff were participating in internal and external meetings with partners and contractors via Zoom and were contributing productively to ensure that

planning for the NLHF project was started. The NLHF 'permission to start' has been received and ED will send out tender documents for the conservation architect and briefs for staff next week. Making progress in these areas is vital to ensure that we can begin to draw down the NLHF grant at the end of April.

A virtual training session with TownsWeb for the digitisation project has been held and planning to set up a basic online version of PastView in the near future is underway.

Trustees were unanimous in applauding the excellent work that all the staff were doing. Staff expertise in developing the depth and range of digital activities is already building the foundations of the future development of DEI activities.

6. **AOB**

EL circulated a revised copy of the Collection Development Policy which is a preliminary requirement for the Collection Review. In summary the new policy:

1. takes into account the change of focus from **only** collecting West Countries studies materials to, in addition, collecting heritage materials, by purchase where funds permit and by gift, to complement our existing foundation collection and to support our programme of engagement.
2. meets current professional sector standards in acquisition and disposal set out by Arts Council England and the Museums Association Code of Ethics. This is important as we move ahead with our National Lottery funded project.
3. includes an additional statement of our responsibilities to care for and use and promote our collections.

Date of next meeting: Wednesday 27 May. It was recognised that the format of this meeting by email communication was not ideal and, if COVID-19 restrictions are still in place, a better format using a video link will be considered.