



Summary of the 121st Meeting of the Trustees of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew held on 27th April 2006

The Director reported that although February and March were difficult with respect to visitor numbers, mainly because of poor weather, the year ended well. In total there were approximately 1.5 million visitors to Kew for 2005-06, a 17% increase on record numbers in 2004-05 and 13% ahead of 2005-06 targets. Her Majesty the Queen's 80th birthday event had been a resounding success, with a large gathering from Defra, Government and the local community. The event had also provided Kew and Historic Royal Palaces with excellent publicity. The Board of Trustees acknowledged the great efforts of all those involved. The Director also noted that Kew's success with Darwin Initiative funding had been exceptionally good this year. Grants totalling approximately £700,000 had been awarded.

The Head of Seed Conservation Department, presented an update report of performance against seed collection targets, and the potential realisation of funding, associated with the Millennium Seed Bank project. The report set out an assessment of the risks inherent in the project, and steps taken to mitigate these risks. A second presentation focused on the vision for the future of Seed Conservation at Kew and how it might relate to other aspects of Kew's science and conservation programmes. It was agreed that a range of proposals should be developed, and potentially benchmarked against the activities of key stakeholders. Based on the project synopses developed in the coming months and the likely costs of those projects, the Board and the new Director would help develop the post 2009 strategy from September onwards.

The Head of Conservation and Higher Education presented a summary of Kew's contributions to *in situ* conservation. Since the last Science Audit, the science teams have had a renewed focus on *in situ* conservation, including efforts to increase the accessibility of baseline plant diversity data, and develop enhanced identification aids, with interactive keys and field guides in a user-friendly style. Another objective has been to increase the number conservation checklists with the aim of informing management planning, making a case for protection and supporting restoration and reintroduction activities.

The Director of Corporate Operations and Finance presented details of additional efficiency savings proposed to realise a reduction in the deficit position in relation to the operating budget for 2006-07. It was recognised that controls should be put in place to monitor the impact of the actions taken. It was confirmed that key risks had been added to the key risk register, to ensure effective control and mitigation.

The draft text of the Annual Review 2005-06 was presented by the Corporate Planning Manager. It was noted that the introduction of a new format for Kew's annual reporting in 2004-05 had received a positive response and the approach adopted was to be extended to 2005-06. The formal Annual Report and Accounts would continue to be produced to meet statutory requirements. In addition, a well illustrated, slim-line review would be produced for consumption by a wide cross-section of stakeholders in the UK and internationally.

Director of Communications and Commercial Activities gave a presentation highlighting the visitor results and evaluation of the Chihuly Festival. A further presentation outlined the main visitor programmes and associated messages for 2006/07-2008/09 along with the activities underpinning these. It was agreed that having a strong festival programme was crucial to drive visitor numbers and allow a range of spin-off opportunities, including education provision, PR opportunities and commercial activities.