



Summary of the 118th Meeting of the Trustees of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew held on 8th December 2005

The Director highlighted several projects due to open in the next six months, including the Alpine House, the Pagoda, Kew Palace and the Lake Crossing. The third *A Year at Kew* series and the *Trees That Made Great Britain* television programme will also help to keep Kew's profile high and visitor numbers buoyant.

The Director and representatives of Wilkinson Eyre Architects presented plans for the relocation of the Brentford Gate car. The aim would be to construct a car park that provides a similar volume of car parking and makes a statement about Kew by providing as much greenery as possible, and uses sympathetic materials. The Board agreed that the proposal should go forward to planning permission. It was also agreed that Kew's position should be to seek no increase in the current allocation of parking spaces, but that the plan also needed to anticipate the possible extension of the Controlled Parking Zone on Kew Green.

The Director of Communications and Commercial Activities presented plans for the summer 2006 "Heritage Festival", and an overview of the planned visitor programmes for the next three years. The proposed themes for 2007/08 and 2008/09 would be "Making the most of the Gardens" and "Celebration of Trees" respectively (working titles). The ideas for the programmes had grown out of initial discussions about educational and scientific messages, for example the issue of climate change and its impact on horticulture. It was agreed that this and other key science/environmental messages should be further clarified as the next stage of planning is taken forward.

A presentation on the work of the Malpighiales science team was given by the leader of the Malpighiales team and Wolfgang Stuppy, Seed Morphologist from the Seed Conservation Department. They outlined the importance of this large group, and gave examples of current work being carried out in comparative plant biology and seed morphology. The new Science Team structure had led to increased cooperation among members of staff and had boosted research activity overall, especially in molecular biology. The large genera in the Malpighiales were of particular importance because Kew was ideally placed to tackle such difficult group. Kew is one of the few institutions with the quantity and geographic range of specimens, as well as the expertise, needed to make sense of very large genera in these hyper-diverse plant families.

The Corporate Plan was now nearly complete, although the Annexes still needed updating. The Board approved submission of the next draft to Defra. The final draft will be brought before the Board at the February meeting in conjunction with the three-year financial plan and then submitted to Defra in March.

The report of the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting showed that Kew's finances are in excellent order, with the operating position now forecast as a modest surplus.