



Summary of the 114th Meeting of the Trustees of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew held on 11 February 2005

Under Matters Arising it was noted that four Darwin bids from Kew were on-track. Peter Crane reported the impressive 46% growth in visits during January at Wakehurst where catering had risen to the challenge despite expansion works in the Stables. Retail continued to show strong growth at Wakehurst in the new Visitor Centre. This underlined the need to press ahead with retail plans at Kew where record visitor numbers made extension of the Victoria Gate shop and improvements to visitor entry essential. Richmond's plans for a Controlled Parking Zone around Kew Green would not now include Kew's perimeter, which is important for staff. However, future planning would need to take account of the possible future expansion of the CPZ.

A presentation on the development of Kew's Commercial Strategy was discussed in detail. The need to continue to build independent income by concentrating on the core visitor business was agreed. Research on key visitor segments would guide specific marketing and development plans. Progress had also been made towards an integrated financial plan that would link Grant-in-aid requirement with capital plans and commercial strategy. The Quarterly Financial review forecast that operating revenue would now end the year ahead of budget on good income figures; capital would be on budget even though the phasing of some projects had shifted. The 2005/06 operating budget indicated the need for additional Grant-in-aid to meet inflation and the new requirement to meet increased superannuation costs; this latter factor would be even more strain in the budget in future years.

Kate Forrest gave a presentation on Flexible Working, emphasising the need to align working practice with business objectives in ways that also benefited staff.

The meeting was advised that the final version of the Corporate Plan would, with minor updates, go to Defra at end-February. The Audit Committee had approved the appointment of Deloitte Touche as internal auditors; the Risk Register (Annex 5 of the Corporate Plan) had been revised for review by the Committee. The Chairman thanked Bob Kirby-Harris for all his contributions to Kew and wished him well in his new role as Director of the Institute of Physics.