



Summary of the 122nd Meeting of the Trustees of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew held on 1st June 2006

The Director of Corporate Operations and Finance presented an update on capital expenditure and project planning. In 2005/06 several capital projects were completed or very close to completion, including the Sackler Crossing, The Davies Alpine House and the Wolfson Wing of the Jodrell Laboratory. Also planning permission was granted for both the Herbarium and Library Extension and the New Gallery. A summary of projected capital expenditure for the coming three years (2006/07-2008/09) was presented. The Board was asked to consider the plans and give their views on the composition of the capital programme and priorities for the medium term.

The Trustees approved the funding and business case for the development of the Plant Information Centre. The centre is crucial for the further development of science and conservation programmes and for the appropriate stewardship of the existing and expanding collections of Kew.

The Trustees noted and approved the "Art at Kew" plans. "Art at Kew", with its two capital projects, the Marianne North Gallery and the new Gallery, offers an opportunity to display art and other exhibits at Kew and reach a broader audience. The Trustees also noted and agreed the plans for the refurbishment of the Marianne North Gallery.

The Director presented his review of 2005/06, the progress made over the last seven years and his thoughts on the future. In 2005/06 the combined visitor numbers for Kew and Wakehurst Place reached 1.9 million. Kew's profile continued to remain high due to the Chihuly festival, good BBC coverage, and was further enhanced by the hosting of HM The Queen's 80th birthday. Successes of last year's science and conservation work include above-target seed collections, the electronic publication of the monocot checklist, continued output of preliminary conservation assessments, and six conservation projects awarded Darwin Initiative Grants. The Director also reported on the successful progress against the Key Measures for the past seven years. Concerning the future, he highlighted that the key challenge is the continuing and increasing pressure on operating budget. Kew will have to be prudent in controlling costs, but also needs to continue to pursue success aggressively.

The Head of Wakehurst Place presented a report on Wakehurst Place covering achievements in 2005/06, business results and issues for the future. In 2005/06 Wakehurst Place saw the opening of the redeveloped Stables restaurant and the complete re-landscaping of the car park. The past year also saw record levels of PR coverage, increased from £1.3 million to over £3 million, highlights including the Wollemi Pine, Year at Kew 2, and Autumn colours. With regard to admissions, the total number of admissions in 2005/06 reached 426,496, a 1.5% decrease on the record figures from 2004/05. However, the sale of season tickets continues to rise, up 18% on last year. The major challenge is to plan for the future of the Millennium Seed Bank project. Another priority will be to drive the business and to find new sources of revenue.

The Head of Finance presented the financial results for 2005/06. The self-generated income through admissions, catering and Enterprises all finished ahead of budget. Operating expenditure finished within budget.

The Annual Report and Accounts were approved and signed by the Chairman and the Director on behalf of the Board.

As this was Peter Crane's final Board Meeting as Director of Kew, the Chairman thanked Peter Crane for his contribution to Kew over the last seven years.