



Summary of the 123rd Meeting of the Trustees of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew held on 21st September 2006

The Chairman announced that during the period after the departure of Peter Crane and before the arrival of Stephen Hopper, Andy Burchell will be Acting Director.

A report by the Senior Management Team outlined the activities at Kew and Wakehurst Place over the summer. In particular, it was noted that:

- there have been several contacts with key people in Defra, including a meeting with the Secretary of State, David Miliband, as well as meetings with three Defra ministers;
- Tony Kirkham and John Hammerton's programme 'Trees that Made Britain' is now being broadcast on Friday nights on BBC2; and
- the London Borough of Richmond-upon-Thames has accepted Kew's ten-year tree management plan.

The Head of Horticulture and Public Education highlighted a new health and safety risk arising from the oak processionary moth. Affected trees have been identified at Kew, and it was agreed that although this issue was under control, it should be added to the risk register.

The Learning Champion presented a report on the education and learning agenda at Kew. She summarised recent developments, findings from the preliminary review of the current learning offer, and options for taking the Education programme forward. It was recognised that Kew has unique strengths but there are many more opportunities available. There is also a need to work with partners of the right kind, possibly in the IT world, to fulfil our aims. There was optimism on the funding for this, despite the current climate.

The Head of Finance presented the financial analysis of operating performance until August 31st and the Acting Director announced the cuts in funding from Defra for 2006/07 and 2007/08. These cuts affect operating activities; there are no cuts to the capital budget. The Board agreed that the deficit arising from the cut for the current financial year (2006/07) would be made up from Reserves. For 2007/08, the Board asked the Finance Committee to examine ways of dealing with these significant cuts and to explore alternative sources of funding.

The Director of Communications and Commercial Activities outlined the three-year pricing strategy that had been previously approved by the Board of Trustees in 2005, subject to a brief review. There were no planned changes in the pricing plan for the coming year and the summer and winter admission prices for 2007/08 would increase by 50p to £12.25 and £10 respectively. The Board provisionally approved the recommendation for the 2007/08 prices but this would need further consideration as a result of the current financial situation.

The Head of Science Operations presented the outcome from the Science Audit that took place in June 2006. The report from the Science Audit team was very positive. It recognised that Kew has broadened its focus to extend beyond the study of taxonomy and curation to create integrated approaches in assessments of plant biodiversity. It also highlighted that Kew supports many of Defra's policies and objectives and contributes to objectives of other Government departments.

A presentation from Kew's Madagascar team followed. The Madagascar Science team was commended in the Science Audit report as doing exemplary work using information from Kew's collections combined with data from other botanical institutions to identify critical areas for conservation. The team have created products of direct use for conservation science. It is also using cutting edge GIS technology and setting a high standard for similar work. The production of field guides was commended, as a new way of using Kew's taxonomic expertise more