

MINUTES OF THE 185th MEETING OF THE RBG KEW BOARD OF TRUSTEES
held on 8 OCTOBER 2020 via Microsoft Teams (tele/video conference)

Trustees

| | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Dame Amelia Fawcett | Chair |
| Val Gooding | Queen's Trustee |
| Nick Baird | Trustee |
| Liam Dolan | Trustee (am only) |
| Catherine Dugmore | Trustee |
| Sarah Flannigan | Trustee |
| Krishnan Guru-Murthy | Trustee |
| Sue Hartley | Trustee |
| Ian Karet | Trustee |
| Michael Lear | Trustee |
| Sir Derek Myers | Trustee |
| Jantiene Klein Roseboom van der Veer | Trustee |
| Sir Paul Nurse | Independent Member (am only) |

In attendance

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Richard Deverell | Director of RBG Kew |
| Professor Alex Antonelli | Director of Science |
| Richard Barley | Director of Horticulture, Learning and Operations |
| Sandra Botterell | Director of Marketing & Commercial Enterprise |
| Ian McKetty | Chief Information Officer |
| Meredith Pierce Hunter | Director of Foundation |
| Fern Stoner | Director of Resources |
| Tony Sweeney | Director of Wakehurst |

Secretariat

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Balwinder Allen | Board Secretary (Minutes) |
| Rachel Pan | Head of Governance and Director's Office |

| | |
|--|---|
| 1. | <p>Chair's introduction and welcome The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting.</p> <p>Apologies An apology for absence was received from Pippa Wicks. Apologies were also noted from Liam Dolan and Sir Paul Nurse for the afternoon session.</p> <p>Declaration of Interest No declarations of interest were declared.</p> |
| Session 1 – Strategy Discussion | |
| 2. | <p>Draft Manifesto for 2030 Richard Deverell submitted the draft 'RBG Kew 2030: A manifesto for change' document for consideration by Trustees. External consultation, from approximately 15 critical friends, had also been sought and consumer research would be carried out. The importance of a clear compelling narrative for RBG Kew that would work for Kew staff and external stakeholders was noted.</p> <p>A short presentation that outlined the feedback from critical friends of Kew was presented. The key messages and themes from the feedback would be incorporated in the next version of the document.</p> <p>Trustees noted their support for the document and welcomed the feedback from the external consultation.</p> <p>Trustees conveyed their appreciation for the thoroughness of the consultation process. The importance of obtaining funding for digitisation and other projects were noted. It was noted that Defra and the government were aware of the importance of digitisation.</p> <p>Different versions of the document for different stakeholders would be considered.</p> <p>Richard Deverell would circulate a revised version of the strategy to Trustees the following week, which would incorporate feedback from Trustees and external consultation. AP1: Richard Deverell</p> |
| 3. | <p>Strategic think piece: Science Strategy (SS) update Alex Antonelli presented a paper on the high-level overview of the five scientific priorities for Kew for 2021-25. The document had been shared with the Science Advisory Committee (SAC) and their recommendations incorporated. The SS had been embedded in the Corporate Strategy and next steps included external consultation, budgetary considerations, risks, and benefits.</p> |

| | |
|----|---|
| | <p>It was noted that in reviewing the SS and other strategies currently in preparation, it was important to fully appreciate the scope of transformation that was being suggested. 20% of the work was in the preparation of documents, 80% lay in its execution. The importance of continual and repeated communications with staff was noted. Setting up focus groups and ambassadors to help support the work was recommended.</p> <p>Trustees welcomed the document and its direction of travel. The SAC had discussed the scale of ambition and sense of urgency, together with identifying what Kew's unique selling point (USP) was, to help identify where Kew should take a leading role (e.g. in partnerships). The need to focus on excellence and areas where Kew could really make a difference ("it could not do everything") was highlighted. The implementation of the strategy, with a clear sense of what success would look like, and how it could be measured and implemented, was reiterated. Comments on the document were noted.</p> <p>Alex Antonelli thanked Trustees for their feedback and noted the importance of excellent science aligning with the overall mission of RBG Kew. Work would be carried out on an operational plan which will provide greater granularity and planning. On the point of 'distribution mapping', it was noted that this would fit well with RBG Kew being an 'information' organisation, as recommended by Sir Charles Godfray in the Science Quality and Impact Review, discussed earlier in the year.</p> <p>On a point on the scale of challenges that were needed by RBG Kew in implementing the various strategies, it was recognised that the task was significant and that the hard work would commence when the strategies were published next year. It would be important for the leadership team to convey the scale of challenge and nature of the changes, including a cultural change, that were needed to make tangible outcomes—this task should not be underestimated. In light of the scale of change anticipated, it was suggested that the management team start developing the 'operational plan' now, even though the strategy had not been finalised.</p> <p>The next phase of work on the SS would include inviting staff to consider and plan how resources and deliverables would be achieved. Wider engagement, consultations and communications would be important.</p> |
| 4. | <p>Update on Sustainability Strategy The Head of Sustainability gave a presentation outlining the work that had been undertaken since her presentation to Trustees in April 2020 on the new Sustainability Strategy. The Sustainability Strategy would work in conjunction with the Corporate and Science Strategies.</p> <p>In discussion, Trustees welcomed the strategy and expressed support on its direction of travel. The need for visibility of the sustainability strategy across the gardens was agreed. On funding, it was noted that a variety of sources of income/investments would be explored. Further consideration would also be given to nature-based solutions where RBG Kew could lead. Continued communications to staff, members and other stakeholders on this important work would be carried out.</p> |
| 5. | <p>Executive Session: Trustees and Director only A closed session with the Director and Trustees was followed by a lunch break.</p> |
| 6. | <p>Presentation: Useful Plants and Fungi of Colombia Grant Scientists in Kew's Natural Capital and Plant Health Department, gave a presentation on the 'Kew-Colombia Bio Programme' noting the alliance with the Colombian government. The project aimed to support the transformation of the country's economy into one based on 'green growth' by promoting sustainable use of its natural capital and rich biodiversity. Kew had eleven projects under this programme, four of which were highlighted in the presentation. The benefits of the programmes included: funding, influence and strong collaboration with the Colombian Government, outreach (including global media interest), and outstanding science (numerous peer reviewed publications, books, and websites).</p> <p>Trustees discussed the various funding options, noting that the funding for the Colombia projects was from the Newton Fund (via Business Energy and Industrial Strategy, 'BEIS'). It was explained that Colombia had been identified as one of three strategic countries where the UK wanted to invest funds in science, innovation, and technology (Chile and Vietnam were the other two). Potential funding for work in other countries was also discussed. The importance of working with local, indigenous communities and capturing their knowledge was emphasised. Diversifying funding, and thoughtful consideration of philanthropic funding, was also noted. On behalf of Trustees, the Chair thanked the presenters for their excellent presentation.</p> |

| | |
|------------|---|
| <p>7.</p> | <p>Opening Remarks by the Chair The Chair noted that Trustees interviews for the five new appointments were progressing well. A farewell gathering would be held for departing Trustees (date to be confirmed).</p> <p>On behalf of Trustees, the Chair thanked Alex Antonelli and his team for the excellent State of the World's Plants and Fungi (SOTWPF) report. She also noted the following updates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - progress on works at the American Prairie at Wakehurst - progress on works on the Family Restaurant and Arboretum HQ at Kew Gardens <p>Congratulations were also conveyed for RBG Kew receiving its best result ever for the international standard for environmental management systems (ISO014001) this year.</p> <p>The successful Circle of Benefactors virtual event held 7 October 2020 was noted.</p> <p>Minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2020 The minutes of the previous meeting held on 18 June 2020 were approved as a true and correct record. Redacted minutes would be published on Kew.org.</p> <p>Actions Log The actions log was noted, all pending actions would be carried forward.</p> <p>Matters Arising All matters arising were covered in the agenda.</p> |
| <p>8.</p> | <p>Director's Report including: Covid-19 update and 2019/20 review The Director's report was noted by Trustees. Richard Deverell gave a short slide presentation for the year ending March 2020, noting that it had been an exceptional year and emphasised the importance of retaining confidence built in that period, especially when planning ahead.</p> <p>The following points were noted in discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2500+ individuals had (to date) registered for the SOTWPF symposium to be held 13 -15 October, from over 100 countries - the ICMS project: progress related to the living collections aspect which went live earlier in the year and would be fully operational in 2021. This was a good example of progress to note to Defra - comprehensive spending review (CSR) bid: further news was awaited on Kew's CSR bid; there was ongoing dialogue with government. Updates to be shared with Trustees accordingly - discussions with the Chair of the National Lottery Heritage Fund and The Rt Hon. Lord Zac Goldsmith, Minister of State, Defra, were noted. The importance of aligning with the Government's 'Green' agenda was reiterated. Alignment with Government's regional agenda also could be helpful, and Kew should consider further outreach - capturing new visitors at both sites: there was anecdotal evidence that both sites had seen new diverse audiences, including younger visitors since the Covid-19 crisis. Work would be done to retain such audiences - outside shelter at both sites, to enable visitors to meet etc., was recommended. |
| <p>9.</p> | <p>Finance Report (including update on multi-year spending review) Fern Stoner submitted a report on the financial performance to end August 2020. She noted that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - there was risk to self-generated income, especially risks to Christmas at Kew (C@K) and the Orchids festival, although early indications showed these could be managed - work had commenced on the 2021/22 budget – focus would be on recovery of visitor income, government funding and RBG Kew's new strategic priorities - CSR was underway and was likely to be challenging - Due to the impact of Covid-19 on visitor and related incomes, the forecast reflected a relatively high degree of uncertainty. Other risks and opportunities were also noted. <p>Trustees discussed the Voluntary Exit Scheme. Changes to align with the new strategies and operational requirements were noted. The current plans to continue with C@K and cancellation only if gardens closed (or further lockdowns) were noted. Plans on how to build back Reserves would be considered as part of the budgeting process and longer-term financial planning.</p> |
| <p>10.</p> | <p>Enhancing Visitor Experience 'EVE' (previously Visitor Facing Systems) A paper on the EVE project was submitted for consideration by Trustees. The investment case had been discussed by the Finance Committee, who had given their support for Option 3. The Committee had also considered feedback from Sarah Flannigan, whose comments had been addressed in the appendix (see Board pack). It was noted that EVE should not be seen as an IT</p> |

| | |
|------------|--|
| | <p>project but a significant culture change initiative that would weave together people and new ways of working—these sorts of projects were critical and often hard to get right, however “the prize was worth it”. It was also noted that the EVE programme would transform customer experience by replacing siloed and inefficient operating processes with a real time, fully integrated solution that unified people, processes, and technology.</p> <p>In discussion, it was noted that the EVE programme was vital for Kew and would provide a step change in the customer experience and Kew’s customer insights, through improved processes and systems. Warm thanks were conveyed to Sarah Flannigan for her invaluable support.</p> <p>It was explained that the software would not be proprietary software. The importance of keeping focus on the eventual benefits and ensuring the project was well resourced and well run was noted, including project managers with real experience/expertise in this sort of area, milestones, tracking etc. As a result, the importance of monitoring KPIs was stressed. It was recommended that a KPI dashboard be developed for reporting against significant projects, such as EVE and digitisation.</p> <p>Trustees approved Option 3 of the EVE project.</p> |
| <p>11.</p> | <p>Pricing 2021/22 for Kew Gardens, Wakehurst and Membership</p> <p>Kew Gardens Pricing 2021/22</p> <p>Sandra Botterell and Paul Guthrie presented the RBG Kew pricing paper for consideration by Trustees. They noted that the pricing recommendations had been balanced against the commercial needs for admissions and membership income and the need for Kew to be accessible to a wide range of audiences. The uncertain market conditions and requirement to support the rebuilding of RBG Kew’s financial stability had created additional pressure on the year.</p> <p>In discussion, Trustees were reminded of RBG Kew’s charitable status and the importance of widening access to all beneficiaries. The balance between the Community Access Scheme and pricing was noted. The introduction of the Young Person’s tickets, and discounts for jobseekers, senior access etc., were noted and welcomed. Greater publicising of the free entry to ‘blue light card’ workers was also recommended. The definition of the ‘job-seekers allowance’ was clarified, and it was emphasised that RBG Kew should also capture low income workers as part of the discounted price schemes.</p> <p>Trustees agreed that a deep dive would be carried out on the ‘Community Access Scheme’ at an upcoming Board meeting to gain greater clarity on which groups/audiences were targeted, progress made to date and aspirations for the future. AP2: Richard Barley/Julia Willison</p> <p>Trustees approved the following changes to the admission prices at RBG Kew site from 1 November 2020 to 31 October 2021:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a £1.50 price increase to £19.50 for the headline on-the-day peak adult price. The online advance rate would change to £17.50 - child walk-up rates for peak season would remain the same, however 50p increase for online rates - a reduction to the discount level on the family ticket offer to protect yield - Winter prices to remain the same as per last year <p>The local residents’ discount would not be changed.</p> <p>Membership</p> <p>Meredith Piece Hunter and Laura Hayward presented the item.</p> <p>Trustees approved a £3 increase to membership and the introduction of a ‘Young Persons Membership’ to take effect from April 2021. They also encouraged converting more day paying visitors to members and promoting direct debits in preference to cash payments when confirming memberships.</p> <p>Wakehurst</p> <p>It was noted that due to the current challenging uncertainties (resulting from Covid-19 and Brexit), it was recommended to hold the Wakehurst pricing structure for 2021/22 at current levels.</p> <p>The primary aim to ensure pricing was kept at a level to drive visitor footfall and maximise commercial growth through membership and secondary spend was noted. Trustees agreed to the recommendation of no changes to the pricing structure at Wakehurst in 2020/21.</p> |

| | |
|-----|---|
| 12. | <p>Proctor & Gamble (P&G) Project Beagle Sandra Botterell and Monique Simmonds submitted the paper on the P&G Project Beagle for consideration by Trustees. It was noted that following the success of Herbal Essences under the partnership with RBG Kew, other parts of P&G had started to express an interest in working with RBG Kew.</p> <p>In discussion, it was noted that a number of Trustees had been involved in considering the risks and benefits relating to Project Beagle and had been assured that due consideration had been given to the risks and mitigations. It was acknowledged that the P&G partnership was a valuable source of income for Kew.</p> <p>Trustees approved the Head of Terms as outlined in the paper.</p> |
| 13. | <p>Annual Report and Accounts 2019/20 (including consideration of RBG Kew as a going concern) Fern submitted the ARA, noting that the previous draft was reviewed by Trustees in June 2020. She noted that the change to the value of the land and buildings had not impacted on the operating result for the year, the designated reserves, or the general unrestricted reserves position. The assessment of RBG Kew's status as a 'going concern', and the National Audit Office's agreement of this analysis, was also noted. Grateful thanks were conveyed to the Head of Finance and his team for their work on the report and accounts.</p> <p>The Trustees approved the Annual Report and Accounts and agreed to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - delegate authority to the Chair and Director to approve any minor amendments arising in the finalisation process, and - authorise the Chair to sign the Annual Report and Accounts 2019/2020, and - the Director to sign the Letter of Representation. <p style="text-align: right;">AP3: Dame Amelia Fawcett/Richard Deverell</p> |
| 14. | <p>Annual Polices: Financial Delegation policy; Reserves policy Fern Stoner presented the above policies for approval. She noted that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Delegated Financial Authorities Policy laid out key principles and levels of delegated financial authorities for Kew and Enterprises (two minor amendments to the policy, highlighted on the cover page, were noted) - the Reserves policy had been reviewed in light of the Covid-19 pandemic and the expected financial impact on Kew in 2020/21 and beyond - Both policies had been reviewed and agreed by the Finance Committee. <p>Trustees approved the Financial Delegation Policy. They also approved the Reserves Policy and the continuing appropriateness of RBG Kew to hold a minimum of £3m unrestricted general reserves and the unrestricted reserves target of £7.5m by 2026 (subject to review and consideration as part of Kew's longer-term financial planning in 2020/21).</p> |
| 15. | <p>Updates from Committees: The synopsis of the committee meetings since the last RBG Kew Board meeting were noted by Trustees. No further updates were reported.</p> |
| 16. | <p>Any Other Business Science Grant Alex Antonelli presented a paper on a Science grant application, for consideration by Trustees. Defra had confirmed grant funding of £2.6m for the World Forest ID at Kew project over five years. This was a key strategic project for Kew Science and the Natural Capital and Plant Health department (approved by Heads of Science). As the grant was over £1.5m, and in line with Governance at Kew and Kew's Delegated Financial Authorities, Trustees approval was needed for contracts over £1.5m.</p> <p>Trustees approved the signing of the grant agreement with Defra (by way of signing a Memorandum of Understanding), for the grant funding of £2.6m for the World Forest ID at Kew project.</p> <p>Draft agenda for 10 December 2020 RBG Kew Trustees meeting. The agenda was noted.</p> |
| 17. | <p>Dates of next RBG Kew meetings in 2020/2021 The dates of the next meetings were confirmed as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 10 December 2020 - 18 March 2021 - 29 April (strategy day) 2021 - 17 June 2021 - 7 October 2021 - 9 December 2021 |