

# Minutes of the 186<sup>th</sup> RBG Kew Board of Trustees Meeting held on 10 December 2020

via Microsoft Teams (video/tele conferencing)

## Present:

Dame Amelia Fawcett	Chair
Val Gooding	Queen's Trustee
Professor Liam Dolan	Trustee
Catherine Dugmore	Trustee
Sarah Flannigan	Trustee
Krishnan Guru-Murthy	Trustee
Professor Sue Hartley	Trustee
Ian Karet	Trustee
Michael Lear	Trustee
Sir Derek Myers	Trustee
Jantiene Klein Roseboom van der Veer	Trustee

## Observer

Sir Paul Nurse	Independent Member
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## In attendance:

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

## Secretariat

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

## Item No. 3

*[Information redacted under s.40(2) of the Freedom of Information Act<sup>1</sup>]*

## Item No. 4

*[Information redacted under s.40(2) of the Freedom of Information Act<sup>1</sup>]*

## Item No. 5

Rachel Purdon	Head of Sustainability Strategy
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## Item no. 6

Ed Ikin	Wakehurst Deputy Director, Head of Landscape, Horticulture & Research
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*[Information redacted under s.40(2) of the Freedom of Information Act<sup>1</sup>]*

Paul Wilkin	Head of Science - Natural Capital & Plant Health
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## Item no. 7

*[Information redacted under s.40(2) of the Freedom of Information Act<sup>1</sup>]*

Karl Newton	Director of Business Services, Foundation
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1.	<p><b>Executive Session: Trustees and Director only (including Board Effectiveness)</b></p> <p><b>Closed session</b></p> <p>Trustees discussed the results of the recent Board Effectiveness exercise, noting that the feedback had been generally positive and that improvements on recommendations had been made since the last review. It was suggested that further consideration be given to providing Trustees with regular updates between meetings and undertaking deep dives on specific areas of business (at future board meetings or separately). It was also thought that some international/global expertise on the Board would be beneficial; this would be picked up at the next Remuneration and Nominations Committee (Remco) meeting in February 2021.</p>
2.	<p><b>Chairman's opening comments</b></p> <p>The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting. She noted that sadly it was the last Board meeting for Ian Karet, Michael Lear and Sir Derek Myers, whose terms of office would end on 28 February 2021. On behalf of all Trustees, Executive Board, and staff, she conveyed sincere thanks to them for their outstanding and wide-ranging contributions to RBG Kew. They would be greatly missed. A leaving dinner to thank them was planned in March 2021, subject to Covid restrictions.</p> <p>The Chair also noted the following updates:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>in consultation with the incumbent Chairs and members of Remco, Catherine Dugmore would replace Sir Derek as Chair on the Audit and Risk Committee and Nick Baird would replace Ian Karet as Chair on the Finance Committee. All other upcoming appointments would be reviewed by Remco at their meeting in February 2021</li> <li>the new Trustees appointments were currently with the Secretary of State's office, and once approved, would be sent to No.10 for final sign off</li> <li>both Christmas at Kew and Glow Wild events had opened and were receiving positive feedback. Congratulations were conveyed to Sandra Botterell, Tony Sweeney and all those involved, for their hard work in getting the events open after national lockdown</li> <li>the Children's Garden had received the 'Partnership and Collaboration Award' at the Landscape Institute Annual Awards (virtual) ceremony. Congratulations were conveyed to all involved</li> <li>congratulations were also conveyed to Alex Antonelli and Mark Chase, who were named as 'Highly Cited researchers' in the Web of Science's prestigious annual list</li> <li>RBG Kew had celebrated the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the MSB on 20 November 2020 with partners around the world, via a 24hr social media event on Facebook and Twitter.</li> </ul> <p>The Chair reported that the latest document on the Corporate Strategy (Manifesto for Change) would be circulated to Trustees and members of the Corporate Strategy Steering Committee (CSSC) on 14 January 2021. All Trustees would be invited to attend the CSSC to discuss the draft, and the final strategy would be circulated to Trustees for approval by 18 January, with a deadline of 27 January 2021.</p> <p><b>Apologies</b> Apologies for absence were received from Nick Baird, Catherine Dugmore (Items 5 – 15), Sir Paul Nurse (non-Science items) and Pippa Wicks.</p> <p><b>Declarations of Interest</b> No declarations of interest were declared.</p>
3.	<p><b>High-Level Science Strategy: Kew's Scientific Priorities 2021-2030</b></p> <p>The Director of Science presented the paper noting that it was a near final draft of a ten-year vision of Kew's scientific priorities for 2021-2030, which would be launched in January 2021, alongside Kew's Corporate Strategy. The full Science Strategy containing detailed actions for 2021-2025 would be launched approximately six months later.</p> <p>Comments were invited from Trustees on the draft document, especially on the adequacy of inclusion of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) the urgency and context of RBG Kew's scientific mission</li> <li>(b) the uniqueness of Kew's role in addressing this mission and</li> <li>(c) the accessibility of the document wording to non-scientists</li> </ul> <p>In discussion, Trustees conveyed their support and enthusiasm for the document. It was considered that there was alignment between the Science Strategy and Corporate Strategy which was welcomed. The following comments and recommendations were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to include additional information on connecting with wider audiences</li> <li>to include additional examples to help demonstrate how Kew could/and had made a difference</li> <li>to bring out items that had lower profiles in the document (e.g., soils, human health/well-being)</li> <li>to re-consider some of the terminology (i.e., 'ex-situ conservation') to enable understanding for the widest possible audience</li> <li>to highlight 'accelerated taxonomy' - a crucial field of study to understand biodiversity and an area 'where no one else does it like Kew' (the importance of genomics, chemistry and sequencing were also suggested)</li> <li>to capture a greater sense urgency and excitement, for example in relation to 'digital'</li> <li>to have greater clarity on how Kew would provide a way forward</li> <li>to be clear this is a high-level document with more detail to come, so that it did not come across as a "marketing" document</li> <li>to include a greater focus on some items (e.g. promotion of fungi)</li> <li>to illustrate how Defra could benefit from Kew's work (e.g., Crop Wild relatives)</li> <li>to illustrate the multifaceted benefits of digitisation</li> <li>to consider swapping the 'context' section with the 'mission' section</li> </ul>

	<p>It was also noted that to build on the importance of science, it would be important to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how Kew delivers the highest quality possible science</li> <li>• resources deemed critical to deliver the strategy (e.g., equipment, capabilities/ recruitment, core disciplines etc)</li> <li>• a structured strategy on partnerships that would benefit Kew</li> <li>• creating a garden of ecologies – to help communicate the importance of ecosystems to the public</li> </ul> <p>Other drafting points and details were also remarked upon in the document. The Director of Science thanked Trustees for their helpful input. Trustees <a href="#">approved</a> the Scientific Priorities 2021-30 document in principle, noting that a final copy of the document would be shared with trustees for final comments early in the New Year.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">AP1: Alex Antonelli</p>
4.	<p><b>Science Quarter (SQ) update</b></p> <p>The Director presented a paper on the SQ, noting that it summarised progress to date. He added that the SQ had the potential to fundamentally rejuvenate RBG's Kew's scientific contributions and determine Kew's global contribution throughout the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Four options were identified. It was noted that ensuring the best outcome for the use of space and talent at Kew were key points for discussion.</p> <p>Attention was drawn to the questions on the cover sheet of the document, and the following comments were noted in discussion: -  <i>[Information redacted under s.36 of the Freedom of Information Act<sup>2</sup>]</i></p> <p>In summarising, the Chair noted the clear steer from Trustees to support one option and invited all Trustees to put forward any further thoughts/comments to the Director. It was noted that it was an ambitious option, and it would be important to consider what was realistic and credible. Further feedback would be sought from Trustees at their next meeting in March, with the aim to return to the Board in June for a firm decision.</p>
5.	<p><b>Draft Sustainability Strategy</b></p> <p>The Head of Sustainability gave a short presentation on the Draft Sustainability Strategy. She noted that the first draft strategy content had begun to take shape, with input still being gathered from teams across Kew. The current structure of the strategy, including some content from sections and examples of commitment/insights with short case studies, were outlined.</p> <p>Trustees' attention was drawn to the questions in the paper, with comments invited on the structure, headline commitments, the tone, and examples of the commitments included in the draft strategy.</p> <p>In discussion, Trustees welcomed the progress on the draft strategy to date. Their comments included the following recommendations: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to provide greater clarity on carbon offsetting, including seeking input from external sources for comparison purposes</li> <li>• to ensure that terminology reaches broad audiences via different communication channels (e.g., websites, documents, policy briefings)</li> <li>• to build in timelines, targets, KPIs and implementation plans—targets and data would help provide authenticity. Governance, accountability, and the need for robustness to ensure credibility are key</li> <li>• to ensure greater focus on emissions with an explanation on why these were important (e.g., how trees/vegetation were carbon reservoirs—RBG Kew and Wakehurst are good examples of this). The importance of a 'carbon budget' was also emphasised</li> <li>• greater prominence of storytelling and especially incorporating 'Kew's voice'.</li> </ul> <p>The commitment to urgency was noted; however, it also was observed that it would take time to gather KPIs which would not be available in time for the publication of the document. The question of 'What Kew was doing ahead of the game?' was asked, and it was <a href="#">agreed</a> that this would be further explored at the next Trustees meeting in March 2021.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">AP2: Rachel Purdon</p> <p>Trustees were invited to let the Head of Sustainability know if they wished to read and comment on the full text once input had been gathered from teams across Kew (likely to be mid-late January 2021). They were also invited to provide further comments on the sustainability strategy prior to the next Board meeting, where the document would be presented for final approval.</p>

<p>6.</p>	<p><b>Presentation: Landscape Ecology Programme: Natural Capital Research at Wakehurst</b></p> <p>A presentation on the Landscape Ecology Programme: Natural Capital Research at Wakehurst was given to Trustees. The presenters noted that the programme explored the role of Wakehurst's outstanding natural landscape, in connection with Kew Science and visitors, in understanding the many benefits of landscape ecology, including human wellbeing. Trustees noted the programme's aim to develop methods for measuring the extent and condition of natural habitats (assets), as well as contributing to the wider UK government's aspiration to create a comprehensive UK account of all our natural capital assets. The presentation highlighted that these would be achieved through four initiatives: 'Treescapes', 'Wakehurst Living Map', 'Pollination services', and 'The Wakehurst Memory Project'.</p> <p>Trustees expressed their enthusiasm for the programme and welcomed the work being carried out in this area. It was suggested RBG Kew might consider a UNESCO 'biosphere reserve status', in addition to its current world heritage UNESCO status. It was suggested that the team also might want to consider a fifth initiative related to 'microbiological and fungal', as well as working with the 'biocultural association'. The various initiatives highlighted, e.g., the collaboration with the Sussex NHS Trust, were welcomed.</p> <p>It was commented that there were many institutions carrying out such work in this 'crowded' space, and it was important, therefore, to identify Wakehurst's 'unique' contributions; this would give the work greater focus and identity. It was also important to consider how Kew would ensure that it was undertaking the best science work, asking what was different about Kew including questions that no one else is asking. Building on the scientific strengths (e.g., pollination and fungi) and ensuring continued connection to Kew's Science Strategy were also emphasised, as were suggestions around linking and partnering with other organisations active in this space.</p>
<p>7.</p>	<p><b>Campaign Update</b></p> <p>The Director of the Kew Foundation introduced the item, noting that a new major comprehensive fundraising campaign was being developed to help support and deliver Kew's long-term strategic goals as set out in the Manifesto and the new Science Strategy. A slide to remind Trustees of the principles of a 'comprehensive campaign' was noted.</p> <p>The approach in the US (e.g., not including membership at places like the New York and Chicago Botanic Gardens) was noted. In the UK, however, there was no precedent for whether to include membership in a campaign.</p> <p>Trustees discussed what should and should not be included as 'income', including the point that some members did not simply view their membership as 'free entry' but felt they were contributing to and supporting Kew. It was suggested that a new membership offer should be considered to take this into account. It was noted that gifts made by members would be included under the banner of philanthropy and considered separately from income generated through membership sales.</p> <p>The inclination to focus on philanthropy only, noting that this would mean a more modest target, was also discussed. It was noted that the target would be considered in line with what would be needed overall to support the delivery of the Corporate Strategy. It was agreed that other income secured by Kew in support of the Campaign projects would be discussed and agreed by the Campaign Leadership Board (and shared with the RBG Kew Board) on a case-by-case basis.</p> <p>Trustees <a href="#">agreed</a> to move forward with option 1 (Philanthropic Income) from the two options presented in the paper, however, with a target to be set for growing membership over the same period.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><a href="#">AP3: Meredith Pierce Hunter</a></p>
<p>8.</p>	<p><b>Minutes of meeting held on 8 October 2020</b></p> <p>The minutes of the previous meeting held on 8 October 2020 were approved as a true and correct record.</p> <p><b>Action log</b></p> <p>The actions log was noted; all pending actions would be carried forward.</p> <p><b>Matters arising</b></p> <p>All matters arising were covered in the agenda.</p>
<p>9.</p>	<p><b>Director's report</b></p> <p>The Director's report was noted by Trustees. The following were noted: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the Director reiterated his personal thanks to the three departing Trustees for their invaluable support to him and Kew over the years</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the outcome of the CSR was still awaited from Defra</li> <li>The Director of Wakehurst gave an update on ticket sales for Glow Wild at Wakehurst, including projected income figures if the event stayed open</li> <li>The Director of Commercial and Marketing gave an update on ticket sales on Christmas at Kew, including projected income figures if the event stayed open</li> </ul> <p>In reference to Appendix 5 (also point 2.11 in the Director's report on increasing access), it was emphasised that Kew should look to set annual targets to help drive an increase in access by underrepresented groups. The importance of linking digitisation with all aspects of fundraising was also suggested. The huge success of Christmas at Kew since its inception was praised.</p> <p>It was noted that Catherine Dugmore had succeeded Sir Derek as lead trustee on Safeguarding.</p>
10.	<p><b>Finance report: 2020/21 update and 2021/22 update</b></p> <p>The Director of Resources noted the following financial updates:</p> <p><b>2020/21 update</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>November performance was being closely monitored but would be impacted by the second national lockdown</li> <li>The government had announced an extension of the Job Retention Scheme (JRS) to end March; the benefit to Kew would be dependent upon the number of staff furloughed – approximate percentages of furloughed staff were outlined</li> <li>No temporary cuts were planned in staff pay for 2020/21.</li> </ul> <p><b>2021/22 Budget and Operational Plan update</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work on the 2021/22 budget and operational plan had begun</li> <li>Achieving a balanced budget would be challenging; projections of future performance would reflect a higher degree of scenario planning. The scenario planning options were outlined</li> <li>The final proposed budget would be presented to the Finance Committee in February 2021 for recommendation to the Board in March.</li> </ul> <p>Trustees noted that the figures made sobering reading. The Covid-related and other (e.g., Brexit) risks were noted. Constraints on various work areas with prioritisation of resources would be essential. The importance of innovation and creative thinking were emphasised.</p>
11.	<p><b>1 Year review against business cases:</b></p> <p>The following reviews against business cases were noted:</p> <p><b>Children's Garden case</b></p> <p>It was noted that this had been a successful project, coming in under budget and on time.</p> <p><b>Facilities Management transition review against business case</b></p> <p>It was noted that the Facilities Management transfer had been cost neutral. The staffing model would be reviewed in 2021 as planned. <i>[Information redacted under s.36 of the Freedom of Information Act<sup>2</sup>].</i></p>
12.	<p><b>Updates from Committees</b></p> <p>The synopsis of the committee meetings since the last RBG Kew Board meeting were noted by Trustees. No further updates were reported.</p>
13.	<p><b>Draft agenda for Board of Trustees meeting on 18 March 2021</b></p> <p>The draft agenda for the RBG Kew Board meeting to be held on 18 March 2021 was noted by Trustees.</p> <p>It was agreed that some items (e.g., Minutes, Director's report and Finance updates) would be held earlier in the meeting under 'standing items'. The Chair invited Trustees to forward any comments on any of the items on the agenda to her and/or the Board Secretary before the next meeting.</p>
14.	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <p>No other business was reported.</p>

15.	<p><b>Dates of next meetings:</b></p> <p>The dates and times of RBG Kew Board meetings in 2021 were confirmed as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 18 March 2021</li> <li>- 29 April (Strategy Day)</li> <li>- 17 June (NB. rescheduled to 24 June 2021)</li> <li>- 7 October</li> <li>- 9 December</li> </ul> <p>Meetings would commence at 10.00am unless otherwise advised.</p>
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## End notes

<sup>1</sup> Section 40(2) of the Freedom of Information Act provides that:

*Information is exempt where either:*

1. *disclosure would contravene data protection principles, or*
2. *disclosure would contravene the right to object under the Data Protection Act, or*
3. *the information is exempt from the right of subject access under the Data Protection Act.*

<sup>2</sup> Section 36 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 provides that: *Information is exempt if its disclosure under this Act would be likely to have any of the following effects:*

1. *prejudice collective Cabinet responsibility;*
2. *inhibit the free and frank provision of advice and exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation; or*
3. *prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs.*