

MINUTES OF THE 187th MEETING OF THE RBG KEW BOARD OF TRUSTEES held on 18 MARCH 2021

Via Microsoft Teams/video conferencing

Trustees

Present:

Dame Amelia Fawcett	Chair
Val Gooding	Queen's Trustee
Nick Baird	Trustee
Professor Liam Dolan	Trustee
Catherine Dugmore	Trustee
Sarah Flannigan	Trustee
Val Gooding	Trustee
Krishnan Guru-Murthy	Trustee
Chris Gilligan	Trustee
Sir Paul Nurse	Trustee
David Richardson	Trustee
Jantiene Klein Roseboom van der Veer	Trustee

Observers:

Judith Batchelar	Trustee in waiting – to join board from 1 Apr 2021
Ian Graham	Trustee in waiting – to join board from 1 Nov 2021

In attendance:

Richard Deverell	Director
Professor Alex Antonelli	Director of Science
Richard Barley	Director of Horticulture and Learning
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

Guests:

Item No. 6

Rachel Purdon	Head of Sustainability Strategy
---------------	---------------------------------

Item No. 7

Vicki Harrison-Neves	Head of Government Affairs
----------------------	----------------------------

Item No. 8

Julia Willison	Head of Participation and Learning
Paul Guthrie	Head of Sales and Marketing
Lorraine Lecourtois	Head of Public Programme

Item No. 9

[Information redacted under s.40(2) of the Freedom of Information Act¹]

HOK	Architects for Science Quarter
-----	--------------------------------

1.	Executive Session The Trustees and Director commenced the meeting in executive session.
	Standing Items
2.	Chair's introduction and welcome The Chair welcomed all members to the meeting and extended a warm welcome to the new Trustees joining the Board, noting their dates of appointments as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chris Gilligan (Science/Public sector) - 8 March 2021 Sir Paul Nurse (Science) - 8 March 2021 David Richardson (Horticulture) - 8 March 2021 Judith Batchelar (Commercial) - 1 April 2021 Ian Graham (Science) - 1 November 2021 Each new Trustee introduced him/herself to the Board and gave a little information about themselves and their background.

	<p>The Chair reported that it was Val Gooding's last Board meeting, as her term of office would end 31 March 2021. On behalf of Trustees and staff, she thanked Val for her outstanding service, especially as Chair of the Visitor Commercial and Advisory Committee and Kew Enterprise Board, both of which she had Chaired for five years. Dame Amelia noted that Kew owed Val a huge debt of gratitude and that she would be very much missed by all.</p> <p>Work had begun on the new Trustees recruitment campaign, and following feedback from Trustees and discussion at the Remuneration and Nominations Committee, it had been agreed that consideration would be given to seeking Trustees with the following skillsets: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit/financial to replace Catherine Dugmore as Chair on ARC • Outreach /Diversity/ Broadening Access • Government/Senior Civil Service • Global/international perspective • Globally recognised scientific reputation and leadership <p>The Chair asked Trustees to let her and the Director know about anyone with these skillsets that we could approach.</p> <p>The Chair also reported on the following updates: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reforestation for Biodiversity, Carbon Capture and Livelihoods Conference held online from 24 – 26 February: the online conference had reached over 2.6k people in more than 110 countries with many more viewing recordings on YouTube. The Chair noted that this is a great example of how Kew's knowledge and outreach can work together to make an impact on such important issues and with global reach. • Plant and Fungal Tree of Life (PAFTOL): DNA sequence data and information on evolutionary relationships has been made publicly available to scientists around the world via the new Kew Tree of Life Explorer portal - a major milestone for the PAFTOL team. • Decolonising our Collections: recent press interest regarding decolonising our collections was noted. There would be an item on Decolonising at the June 2021 Board meeting. The Chair encouraged Trustees to listen to Kew's critically acclaimed podcast, "Unearthed@ Mysteries from an Unseen World". • Kew International medal (KIM): Professor Sandra Diaz was winner of the KIM last year; however, due to Covid-19, Kew had been unable to present the medal to her. The panel were meeting in April 2021 to discuss the award for 2021 and awards for both winners would be planned for 2021/22. Trustees would be advised of a date for this event, when confirmed. <p>The Chair invited all Trustees who had not made philanthropic donations to consider doing so, as it was hoped to achieve 100% gifts from all RBG Kew Trustees and Foundation Council members. She noted the importance foundations and trust place on Trustee support when considering grant requests, and she thanked them in advance for their continued support for Kew.</p> <p>Apologies An apology for absence was received from Pippa Wicks. Sue Hartley sent her apologies for the afternoon session.</p> <p>Declaration of Interest Val Gooding and Sarah Flannigan declared conflicts of interest on Kew Enterprises Agreement items, where they would abstain from discussion on the item. No other declarations of interests were declared.</p>
3.	<p>Minutes of meeting held on 12 December 2019 The minutes of previous meeting were approved as a true and correct record.</p> <p>Actions Log The actions log was noted, all pending actions would be carried forward. The 'Decisions Log' had been included following an internal audit recommendation.</p>

	<p>Matters Arising It was noted that all matters arising were covered in the agenda.</p>
4.	<p>Director's Report The Director's Report, structured around the five strategic priorities, was noted. The Director added that Kew had a strong strategy which provided the framework on 'what we are doing and why it mattered'. The challenge in the next 5-10 years would be to secure the investment which would help determine the scale of ambition over the next decade.</p> <p>The following points were noted in discussion: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The government had a significant role to play in supporting Kew's work in terms of investment; it would be important to align with their agenda where relevant. • Visitor numbers over the winter had been impressive, especially at Wakehurst. Seasonal advertising to maintain the higher level of numbers would continue. • Parking near and around Kew Gardens had become problematic and engagement with the local Council would continue to seek ways to overcome the difficulties. • The lagged effect on science output and grant applications/publications, including extensions on short-term science contracts, due to C-19, were noted. It also was suggested that, given that the effects of C-19 had been particularly pronounced in women, an EDI analysis should be done on the impact on science, particularly women. • The recent announcements regarding government restrictions on ODA funding (significant funding cuts had been announced) and impact on specific science projects would be closely monitored. • Ambitious targets and projects had been set; it would be important to gauge staff morale against these and other challenges faced.
5.	<p>Finance Report The Director of Resources presented a paper outlining the financial performance for the 9 months to 31 December 2020. She reported that: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The financial situation had improved dramatically with the additional funding from Defra, and a break-even position was now anticipated at year-end. • Kew's use of the Job Retention Scheme had started to be unwound. • January and February performance was in line with forecast. • Defra capital funding would be fully utilised by year-end.
	<p>Session 1: Strategy</p>
6.	<p>Sustainability Strategy (SS) The Head of Sustainability gave a presentation which gave an overview of the Sustainability Strategy; it also noted launch plans and dates. The following points were noted in discussion: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was broad agreement that the strategy was very good, including the scope and scale of ambition. • It was important to consider setting priorities and magnitudes of impact (e.g., where would Kew have the biggest impact?) and rank priorities accordingly. It was noted that Kew's energy and water infrastructure were some of the biggest challenges faced. • Given the importance of being public about what Kew wanted to achieve, as well as timescales, the impact on Kew's reputation if outcomes were not met was discussed. It was remarked that there was greater risk if Kew did not set ambitious and transformational targets; any unexpected risks, particularly those that could push Kew off course, would be managed openly and reasonably. • Better understanding was required on Kew's wider carbon footprint, before any attempts could be made to influence it; the challenges in measuring this were noted and more work on this area would be carried out to obtain greater certainty. • The alignment of Kew's targets with those set by Government was important – and would help provide validity to some of the claims re Kew's resources and science.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rapid progress was being made to finalise the strategy; a detailed ‘delivery plan’ would follow. The suggestion of a live-web based document showing timelines, progress etc was noted. • The challenges on high quality data were outlined. Confidence in pathways and numbers would be important. • Including ‘visitor travel’, especially as travel was necessary to visit Wakehurst, was welcomed. <p>On behalf of Trustees, the Chair thanked the Head of Sustainability for her excellent presentation. She also thanked Sue Hartley and Krishnan Guru-Murthy for their helpful inputs into the strategy. Trustees gave their approval of the Sustainability Strategy and their full support for its successful delivery going forward.</p>
7.	<p>Government Affairs at Kew</p> <p>The Director of Resources presented a paper noting the work and ambitions of the new Government Affairs (GA) team at Kew. Trustees welcomed the efforts to upgrade management’s focus in this area and noted that this upgrade in effort was essential, particularly in efforts to (1) obtain funding necessary to implement of Kew’s Manifesto for Change and (2) influence Government policy more broadly.</p> <p>The following comments and suggestions were noted in discussion: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kew’s work was at the epicentre of what Government was trying to achieve in a number of areas, including protecting biodiversity, the Global Britain initiative, Race to Net Zero campaign, etc. These initiatives (and others) gave Kew permission to engage with Government broadly as a ‘Trusted expert’. ‘Green space’ was also noted, given the increased interest in this area (including in the areas of physical and mental well-being). • Kew’s ‘voice’ in areas such as land management, reforestation etc. provided opportunities for Kew and Wakehurst, which should be explored further. • It was important to build relationships with key Ministers, Politicians, Government Advisors, and people of influence generally. A ‘priority list’ should be drawn up of key stakeholders, and a strong relationship/”coverage” campaign developed to enable such connections to be made and developed. Building relationships with other organisations, including partnership and/or working collaboratively, also would be important. • Taking advantage of the opportunities of building up to (and after) COP26, including holding a big major event at Kew, was recommended. • The importance of Kew’s soft influence e.g., via holding events and inviting key people to Kew, was noted. • Building a strong relationship with Defra broadly, not only on funding, was important; to look for initiatives in Defra that are engaging Ministers and could be found in Kew. • Every avenue of connections should be considered e.g., arranging a short visit to Grow Wild projects when the Prime Minister visits the various sites around the country; linking to corresponding events with other countries, especially with S. E. Asia; venue for FCO when foreign dignitaries visiting; work with other organisations (CSAs, Royal Society, Natural Society etc). • In essence, Trustees noted that the strategy should be to “smother” Government as effectively as possible. <p>The high significance of this work was emphasised, and it was agreed that the item be revisited at the June Board meeting for further discussion. Trustees were invited to share any further comments/contacts with the Director of Resources/Head of Government Affairs.</p>
8.	<p>Widening Access</p> <p>The Head of Learning and Participation gave a presentation on the work being carried out on reaching different under-represented communities. It was noted that this was a critical area of work for Kew which tied in with one of its major strategic priorities in the Manifesto for Change: “Extend Our Reach”.</p>

	<p>The following comments were noted in discussion: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The improvements being made in this area of work were welcomed; however, it was considered that Kew should have greater ambition in widening access: big, bold ideas were encouraged rather than just doing more of the same. The work should receive the same level of prioritisation as the Sustainability Strategy, and Kew should be a leader in engaging with the widest possible community/ audiences. It was suggested that areas beyond visitors be considered, such as people on the door, retail concession staff, website etc. • It was recommended to use the collections to highlight important narratives (cultural and scientific) which would help engagement with the wider communities/audiences. • Opportunities for world-wide engagement, especially with the younger generation via new technological means, should be explored. This could be an impactful and cost-effective way of reaching wider audiences. ‘Global Kew’ rather than ‘Global Britain’ was cited, and “Facetime a Farmer” globally was given as a potentially interesting example. • Staff engagement and feedback would be important—finding ways for them to communicate on this and participation. • Gate entry prices to Kew and Wakehurst needed to be affordable for everyone; however, it was recognised that protecting memberships and day paying visitors was also important. Greater consideration on entry prices was recommended as soon as practical. • Building relationships was also important to broaden outreach. <p>Trustees agreed that a new governance approach was needed to give greater focus and impetus to this area of work. A new Trustee Committee, with its own Terms of Reference, including increasing access/outreach and EDI work, was suggested. The item would be added to the June Board meeting agenda for further discussion. AP1: RD:JW</p>
<p>9.</p>	<p>Implementation of Science Strategy</p> <p>The Director of Science gave an update on the changes proposed for Kew Science. He noted that following the launch of Kew’s Manifesto for Change and Kew’s 10-year Scientific Priorities, it was important to have an organisation that was aligned to these priorities and “fit for purpose”. He also noted the importance of adding dynamism and agility to Kew’s science structure. The three main barriers to delivery were: how we are organised, accountability and leadership, all of these barriers currently were being addressed through a realignment of the Science Directorate. The process had been discussed and approved by the Science Advisory Committee, and consultation phase with Science staff had begun on 8 March. The aim was for the new Structure to go live on 1 June 2021.</p> <p>In feedback from Trustees, there was strong support for the new science structure. The following points were also included in discussion. It was important to: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • differentiate between capability and thematic reasoning for some of the changes and strike a balance between strategy and opportunity. Combining internal strengths and strategy would be important; • distinguish between management and leadership, particularly intellectual leadership; partnerships should support creative scientists; • be aware of the tension between top-down strategic initiatives and bottom-up creativity (which come from creative endeavour)—these would have to be carefully managed; • consider staff facilities and partnerships; • be aware of the impact of digitisation – this would make a significant difference to working practices; and • note that culture change can be slow to achieve and requires relentless focus and communication. <p>The objective to increase diversity and gender balance, particularly amongst senior leaders, was welcomed. Trustees were invited to share any further thoughts offline with the Director of Science.</p>

	Session 2: Items for Approval
10.	<p>Budget 2021-22</p> <p>The Director of Resources submitted the Budget for 2021-21, noting that Kew was presenting a balanced operating budget; however, given that it has been prepared in the context of Covid-19, it had a high level of uncertainty, which meant a large contingency had been built in. On-going cost savings, which Directors would manage (via vacancy management and non-pay savings) also had been built in. The budget reflected the ambition to make a general pay award to all staff in 2021, subject to affordability and approval of Kew's pay remit by Defra. This would be reviewed at the end of Q1. Final confirmation on Defra funding was still awaited.</p> <p>In discussion, there was strong support for a general staff pay increase, if affordable, particularly in light of the lack of an increase in the last two years and how hard staff had worked throughout the pandemic. On a point of COP26 and funding, it was noted that corporate sponsorships were being sought; COP26 would be an important platform for Kew's brand awareness. The broader work on influencing policy would need greater consideration to develop further.</p> <p>Operational Plan (OP) 2021-22</p> <p>The Director of Resources submitted the 2021-22 Operational Plan (OP). Recognising that it was a transitional year following the launch of the new corporate strategy in March 2021, a one-year OP that focused on Kew Corporate priorities had been prepared. One of its key priorities was to develop a multi-year plan to deliver the corporate strategy, and review and update its success measures. A new measure of 'access', following feedback from the Finance and Resources Committee, had been included.</p> <p>On behalf of the Trustees, the Chair asked that grateful thanks be conveyed to Finance Team for the excellent work in managing Kew's finance during what had been a difficult and challenging year. Trustees approved the 2021-22 Budget and 2021-22 Operational Plan.</p>
11.	<p>Science Quarter (SQ)</p> <p>The Director introduced the item and explained its context in delivering the Manifesto for Change. Investing in the infrastructure for Science and opportunities for the future would make a step change in the way Kew Science would be carried out. Financial investment in the project would be key. The Director of Science gave his thoughts on how the SQ was critical to the long-term investment in science.</p> <p>HOK presented the 4 options and work being undertaken on the massing and feasibility of the options. They noted that in exploring all options, many evaluations, comparisons, and qualitative analysis had been carried out. The benefits of one option stood out, with its alignment to the SQ objectives, reduced planning risk, and its facilities for public engagement. It would also drive collaboration and partnership and had increased flexibility for expansion on site.</p> <p>In discussion, the steer toward the one option was noted. This option was about how Science, guided by the Science Strategy, would operate, with a strong focus on collaboration. It would provide sustainability and longevity, enabling Kew to become a beacon for plant biodiversity and conservation. Other points noted in discussion included: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The opportunities for expansion, with the consideration of a <i>[Information redacted under s.36 of the Freedom of Information Act²]</i>, would be further explored. - Questions raised by some scientists about the plans were being worked through. - Fostering expansive partnerships would be key to bringing the best minds and collections together; this feeds into the Biodiversity Institute concept, which may be a key element in the funding strategy. However, it would be important for Kew to keep its identity, whilst creating and maintaining strong links with others. - Obtaining planning permission would be key; greater creative thinking is being given to the design of the building.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consideration of working practices, and ensuring they were still relevant in decades to come, would continue to be explored—the plan needs to be “future proof” to the extent possible. - Digitisation would not be relied on solely to solve problems; logistics and different ways of working would be carefully considered. - A study space at the Herbarium with some collections on site would be integral to the plans. - A world class Herbaria would increase footfall (researchers highly likely to come from all over the world to look at specimens); these sorts of demands on the system should be built in. <p>The Chair invited Trustees to feed in any further feedback to the Director and the Director of Science. Trustees endorsed one option as the currently preferred solution for the project. Further work would be carried out and the item would return to the RBG Board in June 2021 for a firm decision.</p> <p>It was also agreed that the Science Trustees would discuss the proposals with a group of scientists before the June Board meeting. AP2:RP/BA</p>
12.	<p>RBG Kew/Kew Enterprises operating agreement</p> <p>The Director of Resources submitted the above agreement for consideration. It was noted that the agreement was in line with best practice and set a contractual framework for matters that were now custom and practice.</p> <p>The agreement had been considered by the Finance and Resources Committee, who had approved its submission for approval to the RBG Kew Board, and Kew Enterprises Board on behalf of Kew Enterprises. After discussion, the Trustees approved the Operational Agreement between the RBG Kew Board and RBG Kew Enterprises Ltd.</p>
	Session 3: Items to note
13.	<p>Covid-19 Lessons Learned report</p> <p>A paper on the above was noted by Trustees. It was commented that the capability of the staff to deliver exceptional gardens during the difficult Covid-19 period were to be admired and appreciated.</p> <p>The importance of focusing and supporting self-generated income, which would help trigger other support (e.g., philanthropic and government) was noted.</p>
14.	<p>Updates from Committees</p> <p>The Chair submitted a report on the various Trustee Committee meetings, which was noted. No further updates were reported.</p>
15.	<p>Forward plan items for the year</p> <p>The forward planned items for the year were noted. Trustees were asked to give any thoughts on additional agenda items to the Chair or the Director.</p>
16.	<p>Draft Agenda for Strategy Day</p> <p>It was proposed and agreed that the Strategy Day be moved from 29 April to May or early June to allow Trustees to meet in person. AP3: BA</p>
17.	<p>AOB</p> <p>No other business was reported.</p>
18.	<p>Date and time of meeting</p> <p>The date and time of the next meetings were confirmed as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strategy Day meeting to be moved; 24 June 2021; 7 October 2021; 9 December 2021, 17 March 2022 <p>Meeting would normally commence at 10.00am, venues to be confirmed.</p>

End notes

¹ 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.*

² 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.*