

**Minutes of the 199<sup>th</sup> RBG Kew Board of Trustees Meeting held on 7 December 2023**  
at Pat Brenan Suite, Herbarium, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Wing E, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, TW9 3AE

Dame Amelia Fawcett	Trustee (Chair) (joined online)
Professor Chris Gilligan	King's Trustee
Steve Almond	Trustee
Professor Ian Graham	Trustee
Krishnan Guru-Murthy	Trustee
Sir Paul Nurse	Trustee
Kate Priestman	Trustee
David Richardson	Trustee
John Scanlon	Trustee
Jantiene Klein Roseboom van der Veer	Trustee
<b>Executive Board</b>	
Richard Deverell	Director
Professor Alex Antonelli	Director of Science (joined online)
Richard Barley	Director of Gardens
Sandra Botterell	Director of Marketing and Commercial Enterprise
Judith Kerr	Interim Director of Development
Lorraine Lecourtois	Interim Director of Wakehurst
Ian McKetty	Chief Information Officer
Fern Stoner	Director of Resources
<b>Secretariat</b>	
Balwinder Allen	Board Secretary (Minutes)
Rachel Pan	Head of Governance and Director's Office
<b>Agenda Items</b>	
<b>Item No. 5</b>	
Paul Kersey	Deputy Director of Science (Research)
Kate Gill	Priority Leader (Digital Revolution)
<b>Item no. 6</b>	
Simon Toomer	Curator of the Living Collections
<b>Item No. 7</b>	
Eliza Gardner	Deputy Director of Science (Operations)
Ciara O'Sullivan	Head of Communications
<i>[Information redacted under s.40(2)<sup>1</sup> of the Freedom of Information Act]</i>	
<b>Item No. 8</b>	
<i>[Information redacted under s.40(2)<sup>1</sup> of the Freedom of Information Act]</i>	
<b>Item No. 9</b>	
<i>[Information redacted under s.40(2)<sup>1</sup> of the Freedom of Information Act]</i>	
Alec Riches	Head of Business Planning and Analysis

<b>Non-Executive Session: Trustees and Director</b>	
The closed session was held with Trustees and the Director.	
<b>Standing Items</b>	
1.	<p><b>Chair's Welcome</b></p> <p>The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting, extending a special welcome to Lorraine Lecourtois, Interim Director of Wakehurst. Sincere thanks from all Trustees were conveyed to Judith Kerr for her role as Interim Director of Development. Rebecca Munro, from Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, will join as Executive Director of Development on 15 January 2024.</p> <p>Trustees congratulated Sir Paul Nurse on his report titled 'Independent Review of the UK's Research, Development and Innovation Organisational Landscape', which received positive feedback from government.</p> <p>The following updates were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>New Secretary of State</b> – Steve Barclay was appointed Secretary of State, Defra, on 13 November 2024. His keen interest in Kew's work, including in expanding</li> </ul>

	<p>mycological research, was highlighted during his visit in December 2023. He also evidenced clear interest in commercialisation of Kew's IP and UK bio-science more broadly.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>COP28 UN Climate Change Conference in Dubai.</b> The Chair, having just returned from the Conference, outlined the main highlights. A strong shift towards a nature-focused agenda and the emphasis on integrating biodiversity into climate talks, was noted. The Kew sustainable wild coffee stand had attracted many ambassadors and government figures (including ministers), helping foster potential partnerships. The philanthropic interest in biodiversity was prominent, signalling potential support and partnerships for RBG Kew. The Chair emphasised that this was a pivotal time for Kew, given the mounting interest in biodiversity, and that it was important to be alert to opportunities and offer support, expertise and engagement.</li> <li>- The across directorate involvement and support from Kew at the Conference was acknowledged by Trustees. Special thanks were conveyed to all involved, especially the Government Affairs Team.</li> </ul> <p>Upcoming dates in 2024: Trustees were invited to:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>The Roadmap to 2030</b> conference on 16 January 2024 at Kew, reflecting on UNFCCC COP28 and looking ahead to the 3 Rio Convention COPs in 2024. It would also focus on the delivery of various climate, nature, and sustainable development 2030 goals, bringing together diverse sector leaders.</li> <li>- <b>Orchids Festival</b> from 3 February to 3 March 2024, featuring the natural beauty and biodiversity of Madagascar.</li> <li>- <b>Trustees Dinner</b> to be held on 4 September 2024.</li> </ul> <p>The Chair reminded Trustees of the important decision on the New Herbarium Project item, noting that a significant amount of work, due diligence and research had been carried out.</p>
2.	<p><b>Apologies</b> Apologies for absence were received from John Scanlon and Sir Jeremy Darroch. Judith Batchelar left the meeting at 3.15pm.</p> <p><b>Declarations of Interest</b> There were no declarations of interest.</p>
3.	<p><b>Minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2023</b> The minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2023 were <a href="#">agreed</a> as a true and correct record.</p> <p><b>Actions Log</b> The Actions and Decisions Log was noted by Trustees.</p> <p><b>Matters Arising</b> It was noted that all matters arising were covered in the agenda.</p>
4.	<p><b>Director's Report (including Fundraising update, Finance report and Government Affairs update (including COP28))</b> The Trustees reviewed the Director's report, who drew attention to the following key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The highly successful State of the World Plants and Fungi symposium in October 2023 underscored Kew's convening power. It had received positive feedback from attendees.</li> <li>- Christmas at Kew had been a great success, with 98% of tickets sold to date. There is interest in adding a week in 2024.</li> <li>- The Learning Centre costs, including fundraising efforts to date, were outlined. Plans to proceed were dependent on reaching funding milestones (£10 million), which were close. The contribution, from a potential charitable Trust, was acknowledged. Architectural plans were awaiting planning consent.</li> </ul> <p>The following further points were noted by Trustees in discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>[Information redacted under s.43(2) of the Freedom of Information Act<sup>2</sup>]</i></li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Glow Wild at Wakehurst was excellent and well received. Sales had been impacted by cost-of-living increases and late bookings.</li> <li>- The economic value of Kew exercise, last carried out in 2019, had been repeated. A request to clarify whether Kew was a net contributor or recipient of government funds (AP1: Fern Stoner) was noted. Emphasis on presenting this information to potential funders and government officials, especially considering potential budget implications, was further noted.</li> <li>- <i>[Information redacted under s.36 of the Freedom of Information Act<sup>3</sup>]</i></li> </ul>
5.	<p><b>Digital Opportunities in Science</b></p> <p>Trustees received a presentation on the digital opportunities in science, highlighting Kew's progress in delivering a significant digital resource through its Digitisation programme. The presentation emphasised the potential to widen Kew's reach, enhance processes, integrate historic material into contemporary biodiversity research, and expedite effective conservation action based on field-derived data. The maintenance and updating of digital resources required funding for essential products and services, necessitating collaboration between Kew Science and Kew IT to ensure viable infrastructure and skills in-house. It was emphasised that digital was a very competitive environment and positioning Kew's digital products and services needed development to achieve targets relating to impact and reach.</p> <p>During discussion, Trustees commended the success of the ongoing digitisation efforts and acknowledged the transformative impact on research. The evolving policy landscape, extending beyond AI and machine learning, was noted. Recent events, such as the UK Bletchley Park Declaration and US Executive Order, were recognised as influential in shaping policy in relation to digital opportunities.</p> <p>During Q&amp;A, the following points and observations were noted: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommendations were made to explore funding opportunities through avenues such as Bridge AI (£100 million funding, including for agriculture and food) and open platforms such as the Ministry of Defence's open platform 'Public'.</li> <li>• On the flexibility of the data collection system, it was clarified that the system was primarily a specimen management system, but configurable to allow more complex functions. Future considerations included the integration of morphological data, DNA information and taxonomy, and a searchable function.</li> <li>• Insights from the Madagascar team highlighted the ongoing efforts to adapt methodologies in diverse field environments.</li> <li>• Reference was made to the list of opportunities and potential commercial revenue generating tools versus open access research tools.</li> <li>• An evaluation of potential for commercial opportunities through a Greensphere lens, using the Kew REACH project as an example, was suggested. In that context it was noted that "packaging data" is not commercial but analysis is.</li> <li>• Concerns were raised about companies profiting from freely available biodiversity data, prompting a call for careful consideration of licensing data produced by scientists to prevent commercial exploitation.</li> </ul> <p>Trustees expressed appreciation and support for this critical area of work. The need for a strategic, forward-looking approach to navigate the evolving landscape of nature and biodiversity interest was emphasised. It was recommended to devise a clear strategy to address the breakthroughs and the commercial opportunities outlined. Collaboration between Kew Science and IT was stressed, with an emphasis on ensuring the team had the right capabilities and structures to advance the project.</p> <p>It was recommended to present a comprehensive plan through the Science Advisory Committee for the next stages, addressing breakthroughs and commercial opportunities outlined in the digital opportunities landscape.</p>
6.	<p><b>Investment in Horticulture</b></p> <p>Simon Toomer gave a presentation to Trustees on investment in horticulture at Kew Gardens. Outlining the Garden's historical details, he drew attention to the major threats, challenges and barriers, and the actions needed for future planning. The vision was to 'create a coherent and resilient living landscape of great beauty that retained its historical</p>

	<p>character while serving contemporary needs for visitor enjoyment, well-being and recreation. The landscape would be maintained and shaped by knowledgeable and well-equipped staff with skills to understand the historical and aesthetic, as well as the botanical values of the Gardens’.</p> <p>The presentation also noted that the primary purpose of the living collections was to support scientific research and plant conservation. However, the contributions to historical and aesthetic landscapes for heritage conservation, visitor enjoyment and wellbeing were less clearly defined. The living landscape, representing a complex overlay of historical styles, faced threats from climate change and needed coherent landscape management. To address these issues, new staff positions had been created, emphasising the need for a comprehensive living landscape and a Landscape Succession Plan grounded in climate dynamics. Monitoring progress and success were identified as crucial requirements.</p> <p>In discussion the importance of a unified living landscape plan was emphasised. It was further noted that: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The modelling of garden maps was species-specific, incorporating average temperature data and sophisticated enhancements for factors such as rainfall and seasonality.</li> <li>- Succession planning during extreme weather events, particularly storms, was discussed, with insights from the 1987 hurricane highlighting some positive outcomes alongside loss, such as thinning weak stocks and stimulating new collections and planting.</li> <li>- The critical need for a living landscape plan that integrated science and considered aesthetic aspects was emphasised. The challenge of finding an equilibrium between these two aspects was noted, as was the need to balance demonstration and informing.</li> <li>- Recognition of commercialisation opportunities for world-class historic landscapes knowledge and skills was also noted, particularly given that Kew’s is first class/world-leading.</li> <li>- The importance of clarity on the next steps was stressed, including more information on what Kew is doing with the Living Collections.</li> <li>- Retaining Kew’s appeal to a broader community was also expressed.</li> </ul> <p>Trustees recognised the positive initial exploration of this important topic and recommended that a further conversation on the matter be held in the near future, with a clear plan on the future vision. The need to dedicate more time on the matter was noted, and balancing the aesthetic with science and horticulture was reiterated.</p>
7.	<p><b>New Herbarium Project – update on due diligence</b></p> <p>Trustees noted the due diligence progress that had been carried out on the New Herbarium Project (NHP), including the commercial negotiations. It was noted that the assessment of the impact of moving the herbarium collections on Kew Gardens World Heritage Site status was on-going and would require continued engagement with relevant bodies over an estimated period of 6–18 months.</p> <p>Recognising the significance of the decision to be taken, Trustees examined each aspect of the due diligence process in turn and made the following observations/points in discussion:</p> <p><b>Plot Selection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The chosen plot, forming a triangle with the British Museum and Natural History Museum (NHM) plots, was clarified as the designated area for consideration.</li> <li>• The plot allowed for different orientations of the building (which would take into account noise, daylight, climate etc); however, this did not need to be decided at the current stage.</li> <li>• <i>[Information redacted under s.36 of the Freedom of Information Act<sup>3</sup>]</i></li> <li>• The need for clarity in the documentation regarding the chosen plot and associated details was emphasised.</li> </ul>

## **Due Diligence**

The due diligence process had involved the assessment of various factors to ensure the viability and feasibility of the project. Key aspects are noted below:

### **Flood Risk Assessment:**

- The chosen plot was indicated to have the lowest level of flood risk, a crucial consideration for the project's viability and safety.

### **Infrastructure and Power Supply:**

- Site access, logistics, and power supply were assessed and outlined to Trustees.
- *[Information redacted under s.43(2) of the Freedom of Information Act<sup>2</sup>]*

### **Environmental Sustainability and Biodiversity**

- Due diligence included environmental sustainability, biodiversity, and tree protection.
- It was important to strengthen the language in the document around the commitment to achieving biodiversity net gain.

### **Transport Access**

- Transportation access, particularly public transport options, were considered with the possibility of a shuttle bus which would be looked into.

### **Contractual and Commercial**

- Negotiations with TVSP have progressed well, aligning with terms negotiated by the NHM.
- An 'exclusivity agreement' securing the land until 2025 was agreed in principle, with a potential extension to 2027 subject to certain conditions.
- If Trustees agreed to proceed with TVSP, an agreement for Lease would be finalised in 2024/25.
- The Heads of Terms with TVSP had been agreed and would be circulated to Trustees for approval in the New Year.
- Trustees acknowledged the negotiation of good commercial terms with TVSP.

*[Information redacted under s.36 of the Freedom of Information Act<sup>3</sup>]*

### **Strategic Outline Business Case and funding**

- The Strategic Outline Business Case had been approved for submission to Defra.

### **Project Governance and resources**

- Trustees requested a World Heritage Site status timeline.
- The substantial roles for the SRO and deputy SRO were acknowledged emphasising the need for sufficient resources.
- The importance of appointing an outstanding Programme Director, and an Estates Senior Project Manager was highlighted.
- It is important to consider the Science Quarter in parallel.
- Consistency of presenting the project as part of the broader Science Transformation Programme, including the addition of resources, was reiterated.

### **Communications and engagement**

- The proposed internal and external communication strategy was discussed.
- The importance of positioning the project as world-class facilities for tackling global biodiversity challenges, and Kew's global importance in dealing with critical issues was noted—the tone should be upbeat and excited.
- Trustees expressed sincere thanks to the Head of Communications for her efforts.
- Trustees also acknowledged and conveyed deep appreciation to the Deputy Director of Science (Operations).

	<p>Trustees unanimously <a href="#">approved</a> Thames Valley Science Park as the preferred site for relocating Kew's Herbarium collections, and endorsed: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. proceeding with the exclusivity agreement for the identified plot and</li> <li>b. progressing the business case to secure government funding.</li> </ul> <p>The commitment to progress planning and design alongside addressing heritage issues was emphasised. Trustees expressed gratitude to all involved for their work on this important project.</p>
	<p><b>LUNCH BREAK</b></p> <p>Trustees stopped for lunch, followed by tour of Kew Treasures in Library and Archives.</p>
8.	<p><b>The Herbarium Handbook</b></p> <p>A presentation was given on the new Herbarium Handbook, outlining the role of the Herbarium curation team, their responsibilities, and the ongoing projects in the Herbarium. The handbook had undergone a significant transformation, not only in design, but also in concept, incorporating contemporary best practices from Kew staff and collaborators worldwide.</p> <p>Described as inclusive and accessible, the handbook serves as a guide for training interns and volunteers whilst also disseminating best practices. The presentation highlighted various promotional efforts, translations, and positive sales figures. Additionally, upcoming presentations and workshops were noted, indicating a global interest in the handbook.</p> <p>Trustees welcomed the presentation, recognising the alignment with strategic threads of education, training, and partnerships. They praised the team for their work on the new handbook.</p> <p>During Q&amp;A it was noted that Kew received over 4k loan requests and that, following digitisation, increased loan requests were anticipated. However, collaborative efforts (with New York Botanical Garden and Missouri) to establish protocols for sampling were planned to manage the anticipated increase in demand.</p> <p>On the impact of the proposed herbarium collections move, it was remarked that potential staff changes, and their influence on team dynamics, were anticipated. Changes in daily interactions and communications were also anticipated. However, the presenters emphasised the evolving nature of the Herbarium curator's role and the team's unwavering commitment to building the best herbarium.</p>
9.	<p><b>Commercial Income Growth:</b>  <i>[Information redacted under s.43(2) of the Freedom of Information Act<sup>2</sup>]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Update on other commercial income growth plans</b></li> </ul> <p>Alec Riches gave an update and noted that <i>[Information redacted under s.43(2) of the Freedom of Information Act<sup>2</sup>]</i>. The importance of less visible projects, concentrating on delivery and improvements, such as analytics, optimisation and implementing a test-and-learn approach at Kew, was also emphasised.</p> <p>During Q&amp;A, a question was raised regarding prioritisation and challenges in deciding where to allocate resources. It was explained that the list was prioritised to ensure a spread of investments across various revenue streams.</p> <p>Concerns were expressed about whether the plan was ambitious enough, particularly regarding the potential benefits and risks associated with the <i>[Information redacted under s.43(2) of the Freedom of Information Act<sup>2</sup>]</i>. Acknowledging some level of risk, <i>[Information redacted under s.43(2) of the Freedom of Information Act<sup>2</sup>]</i>, it was added that capital constraints limited the ability to accelerate certain investments.</p> <p>Enthusiasm and admiration for the plan was acknowledged, and thanks were conveyed to the team for their valuable contributions. The commitment to ongoing progress and</p>

	updates was noted, reflecting the collaborative effort to ensure the success of the commercial income growth initiatives.
10.	<p><b>Operational effectiveness</b></p> <p>The Director provided an update on the work on Operational Effectiveness, outlining key next steps, including addressing gaps in resources and capabilities across directorates and advancing five key organisational effectiveness themes identified through the <i>pro bono</i> Bain survey with the Kew Leadership Forum. While work being done is good, the Director noted that he believes even more ambition is needed and the pace needs to pick up.</p> <p>The concept of ‘employee value proposition’ (EVP) was clarified, which included the unique benefits that an employee received in return for skills, capabilities and experience brought to Kew. It also encompassed the key reasons that staff were proud and motivated to work at Kew.</p> <p>In discussion, it was noted that the primary focus on enhancing pay to bridge the gap with competitors would impact Kew’s ability to attract and retain top talent across various departments. However, whilst pay was crucial, the broader EVP included factors such as training, career development, alignment with personal values, and a supportive work environment. It was remarked that clear career development systems and addressing underperformance were also key for motivation. It was noted that focusing on poor performers must be done by leaders, not by HR. Maintaining a balance between pay, benefits, and personal growth opportunities to ensure high performers felt valued and challenged, was emphasised.</p> <p>The issue of cost effectiveness against operational effectiveness was discussed. It was suggested to undertake a review to challenge teams on potential budget reductions to identify inefficiencies. In response, it was noted that on-going efforts to optimise efficiencies, particularly in technology and staff accommodation, were being considered. The importance of sustainable savings versus short-term cuts (cost efficiencies v cost-cutting) was noted.</p> <p>Trustees expressed support for the ongoing ‘operational effectiveness’ work, recognising it as a positive challenge for growth and development. The absence of a system to measure the productivity of volunteers (numbering between 700-800) was acknowledged, and suggestions were made to learn from other organisations with significant volunteer forces, such as National Trust and NHM.</p> <p>The Director was commended for establishing a <i>pro bono</i> partnership with Bain, which had led to valuable contributions and projects.</p>
11.	<p><b>Updates from Committees</b></p> <p>The synopses from the recent Committee meetings were noted.</p> <p><b>Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) held on 9 November 2023</b></p> <p>The Chair of ARC reported that the Committee had approved the reappointment of Mazars as internal auditors for the next three years. This decision was reached following a competitive procurement process.</p> <p><b>Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee held on 27 November 2023</b></p> <p>The Chair of EDI reported that an important topic emerged regarding the establishment of targets for Kew’s workforce and visitor numbers at their meeting. The question of whether Kew should aim to reflect the National or London average in its workforce, considering the balance between ambition and practicality was considered. The discussion also highlighted the need to formulate targets for EDI and determine appropriate benchmarks. It was suggested that the matter be included as a dedicated agenda item in future board meeting.</p>
12.	<p><b>AOB: Draft agenda for 21 March 2024 Board of Trustees meeting</b></p> <p>The draft agenda for 21 March 2024 Board meeting was noted by Trustees.</p>
13.	<p><b>Dates and Times of next meetings:</b></p> <p>The dates and times of next meetings were confirmed as:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 25 April 2024 – Trustees Strategy Day, Natural History Museum</li> <li>- 20 June 2024 – Board Meeting, Wakehurst</li> <li>- 10 October 2024 – Board Meeting, Kew Gardens</li> <li>- 5 December – Board Meeting, Kew Gardens</li> </ul> <p>Meetings would commence at 10.00am, unless otherwise advised.</p>
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<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 43(2) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 provides that:

Information is exempt if its disclosure under this Act would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any person (including the public authority holding it).

<sup>3</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.