**Minutes of the Meeting of the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE)**

**Board of Trustees**

**held in the David Douglas Room, John Hope Gateway**

**on Wednesday 5 December 2018 at 1345**

**Present:** Sir Muir Russell Chairman of Trustees

Dr David Hamilton Trustee

Prof Thomas Meagher Trustee

Ms Diana Murray Trustee

Prof Ian Wall Trustee

Mr Chris Wallace Trustee

Prof Beverley Glover Trustee

**In Attendance:** Mr Simon Milne Regius Keeper

Mr Ian Brown Head of Finance

Ms Kari Coghill Director of Enterprise and Communication

Ms Judy Cromarty Head of Resources and Planning and Board

Secretary

Ms Emma Lacroix Director of Development

Mr Kevin Reid Director of Horticulture and Learning

**Apologies:** Prof Pete Hollingsworth Director of Science and Deputy Keeper

| **NO** | **ITEMS** | **ACTION** |
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|  | **Private Meeting**  The Board of Trustees held a Private Meeting prior to the Main Board meeting. |  |
|  | **Presentation**  Prior to the meeting Dr Chris Ellis (Head of Cryptogams) had given Trustees a presentation on the Scottish Conservation Programme. Trustees expressed their thanks for a stimulating overview of RBGE’s pioneering work on Scottish habitats and community partnerships. |  |
|  | **OPENING ITEMS:** |  |
| **1.0** | **Apologies**  Apologies were received from the Director of Science and Deputy Keeper. |  |
| **2.0** | **Trustees’ Conflicts of Interest**  No conflicts of interest were reported. |  |
| **3.0** | **Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on Wednesday 3 October 2018**  The Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 3 October 2018 were accepted as a true record of the meeting.  **ACTION:** The PA to the Regius Keeper would place a copy of the approved Minutes in the Library, on the General Drive, the RBGE Website and circulate by e-mail to the Board of Trustees. | **PA to the Regius Keeper** |
| **4.0**  4.1 | **Matters Arising**  Head of Exhibitions  Emma Nicolson the new Head of Exhibitions would start on Monday 10 December 2018. |  |
| **5.0**  5.1  5.2  5.3  5.4 | **Chairman’s Report**  Communications with the Scottish Government on Edinburgh Biomes  The Chairman had written to Roseanna Cunningham MSP (Cabinet Secretary for the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform) on Friday 19 October 2018 and she had responded on Monday 5 November 2018.  Trustees’ Recruitment  The Chairman, Prof Glover and Dr Hamilton had been interviewed about the role of a Trustee and the footage would be used in the recruitment process for new Trustees. The advert had been issued on Wednesday 5 December 2018 and an RBGE Press Release would follow.  Audit Committee  Prof Tom Meagher would join the Audit Committee until a new Trustee was appointed.  RBGE Health and Safety Committee  Prof Beverley Glover would be the Trustees’ representative on the RBGE Health and Safety Committee until a new Trustee was appointed. |  |
| **6.0** | **Regius Keeper’s Report**  The Regius Keeper presented his report and highlighted:   * Trustees had been sent the Performance Report for Q2. * New members had been appointed to the Development Team. * The Operational Delivery Plan was forecasting a modest overspend in the capital budget due to the repairs required to the James Duncan Café at Benmore Botanic Garden, following a fire, and as a result of re-allocating essential capital costs arising from Edinburgh Biomes. * The Director of Horticulture and Learning was leading and making good progress with disaster recovery planning. * ICT cyber security was being addressed with additional resources in place to assist so that RBGE could meet the Scottish Government’s standards. It was noted in the application of cyber security measures it was important to ensure that RBGE’s specialist ICT systems must remain operational. * The Director of Horticulture and Learning now line managed the Estates Team and enhancements were being planned to the management of maintenance and capital priorities. * The Employee Engagement Survey had achieved a 72% response rate (13% higher than any previous year). Twelve of the sixteen comparative questions had more positive increases than the previous survey, and only one had dropped significantly. The majority of responses overall were positive, though with a variety of concerns highlighted in the comments section. The main themes of these concerns were around: * Processes for communicating decisions and consultations. * Visibility of senior management. * Opportunities for career development. * Equipment improvements. * Perceptions of fairness and consistency in decision making.   **ACTION:** The Regius Keeper would update Trustees on the general conclusions and actions arising from the Employee Engagement Survey.   * Recruitment for a new Head of Tropical was underway and a job offer made. It was noted that the Science Advisory Committee were not involved in the process as their role was in an advisory capacity, although there was external expertise on the Panel. * The Regius Keeper’s priorities included Budget development, Corporate Plan and strategy, Edinburgh Biomes and records management. * The process for the 2020 - 2025 recruitment of a new Chairman of the Board of Trustees would be developed in the new year with the involvement of Prof Tom Meagher. | **Regius Keeper** |
| **DECISION/ DISCUSSION ITEMS:** | |
| **7.0** | **Edinburgh Biomes**  The Head of Resources and Planning presented a high level summary of progress and risks with Edinburgh Biomes.   * A Report following the Scottish Government’s Gateway Review had been received and four recommendations made which had been accepted by the RBGE. The Outline Business Case would be amended. * The Scottish Government’s budget announcement was expected in the next few weeks and would impact on the future of the Edinburgh Biomes programme. * A Risk Register for Edinburgh Biomes would be amended in response to the Scottish Government’s decision on funding for the programme. * At the last Programme Board Meeting held on Wednesday 28 November 2018 a shortfall in resources for professional fees to move ahead to the next stage of the project had been identified. Trustees proposed that if a commitment for adequate funding was received from the Scottish Government in their budget announcement then RBGE could liquidate some shares in the Board Reserve to allow the work to take place this financial year. This was on the proviso that the Board Reserve assets would then be restored when funding was received from the Scottish Government. Trustees gave approval in principal to this proposal to allow the Edinburgh Biomes programme to continue with no break. Trustees suggested that information in the Scottish Government’s Framework Agreement be considered and it was noted that the public sector finance regulations must be checked to ascertain if such activity could be undertaken ahead of grant.   **ACTION:** The Head of Resources and Planning would check the Scottish Government’s Framework Agreement and Scottish Public Finance Manual to find out if the RBGE could spend funds in advance of actually receiving them.   * Trustees asked for clarification on the proposed route of the visitor experience to ascertain if the Fossil Tree was accessible to all visitors. It was confirmed that the current plan was that the Fossil Tree could be viewed from inside and outside the pay zone. | **Head of Resources and Planning** |
| **8.0**  8.1  8.2 | **Corporate Strategy:**  Headline Strategic Plan  The Trustees were invited to comment on the initial scope of the Corporate Plan 2019/20. A “three pillars” (Strategic Themes) approach had been introduced. The first draft of the Corporate Plan would be presented to the Board at their next meeting. Trustees endorsed the approach and asked that consideration be given to potential partnership opportunities and the accessibility of knowledge.  Draft Headline Budget  The Head of Finance presented a paper with budget scenarios and assumptions for the financial year 2019/20 which included potential savings measures. Funding figures from the Scottish Government were awaited. Trustees were concerned about the presentation of the options proposed for potential savings, the impacts of which could be underestimated by those without specialist knowledge. |  |
| **9.0** | **Risk Register Q3 – Red Risks**  The Head of Resources and Planning reported that work was progressing on the development of the new Risk Register which would be more closely mapped to planning and would include the Edinburgh Biomes programme and contain broader mitigating actions. The new Risk Register would be presented at the next meeting. There had been no changes to the current Risk Register which was presented for information. |  |
| **INFORMATION ITEMS:** | |
| **10.0** | **Finance Update**  The Head of Finance reported on figures presented to the end of October 2018.  The Head of Finance reported that while a deficit was currently forecast, the Finance Team were working with Cost Centre Managers to ensure a balanced budget was presented at the year end. In response to recommendations from the Internal Auditors information on Capital Projects had been presented to the Board in a new format which reported on risk and status. |  |
| **11.0** | **Major Capital Project Updates**  The Director of Horticulture and Learning reported that new strategic prioritisation of capital estates projects was being undertaken. A new boiler was being installed to feed the research and heritage glasshouses which could be reused for Edinburgh Biomes. Future reports to the Trustees would show planned activity in addition to current status reports. |  |
| **12.0** | **Report of the Audit Committee**  The Chairman of the Audit Committee reported that progress was being made on the Audit Action Tracker. The presentation of Maintenance Metrics would keep the Audit Committee informed of progress with the implementation of the RBGE’s maintenance programme. |  |
| **13.0** | **Report of the Arts Advisory Group**  The Chairman of the Arts Advisory Group reported that members were an enthusiastic group who were keen to assist the RBGE. A meeting had been held in April to consider the boundaries of the group and a remit had been approved by the Board of Trustees. The Arts Advisory Group had provided advice on the recruitment of a new Head of Exhibitions and a member had sat on the recruitment panel. Ms Emma Nicolson would start on Monday 10 December 2018. A meeting had been held on Monday 26 November where new members of staff had been introduced and consideration given to the way ahead for a new Arts Strategy for the RBGE. The summer exhibition in Inverleith House ‘Lost Words’ had been very well received and had achieved the largest number of visitors for many years. A Workshop would be held with the new Head of Exhibitions. Trustees asked if an Arts Strategy for Edinburgh Biomes was required. It was agreed that this would form part of the Arts Strategy for the RBGE to ensure an integrated approach. |  |
| **CLOSING ITEMS:** | |
| **14.0** | **Any Other Business**  There was nothing additional to report. |  |
| **15.0** | **Arrangements for the Next Meeting to be held on Wednesday 27 February 2019**  The next meeting would be held on Wednesday 27 February 2019 at 1330 in the David Douglas Room, John Hope Gateway. |  |

**Jennifer Martin**

PA to the Regius Keeper

6 December 2018

**ANNEX 1**

| **NO** | **ITEMS** | | | **ACTION** | |
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| **OPENING ITEMS:** | | |  | |
| **3.0** | | **Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on Wednesday 3 October 2018**  **ACTION:** The PA to the Regius Keeper would place a copy of the approved Minutes in the Library, on the General Drive, the RBGE Website and circulate by e-mail to the Board of Trustees. | **PA to the Regius Keeper** | |
| **6.0** | | **Regius Keeper’s Report**  **ACTION:** The Regius Keeper would update Trustees on the general conclusions and actions arising from the Employee Engagement Survey. | **Regius Keeper** | |
| **DECISION/ DISCUSSION ITEMS:** | | |
| **7.0** | | **Edinburgh Biomes**  **ACTION:** The Head of Resources and Planning would check the Scottish Government’s Framework Agreement and Scottish Public Finance Manual to find out if the RBGE could spend funds in advance of actually receiving them. | **Head of Resources and Planning** | |