**Minutes of the 167th Meeting of the**

**Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE) Board of Trustees**

**on Wednesday 29 March 2023 at 1400**

**Hybrid Meeting (In Person Board Room and via Microsoft Teams)**

**Present:** Dominic Fry Chair of Trustees

Sarah Cathcart Trustee

Sarah Gurr Trustee and Chair of the Science Advisory Committee

David Hamilton Trustee and Chair of the Investment Committee

Ian Jardine Trustee and Chair of the Audit Committee

Liz Trevor Trustee

**In Attendance:** Ian Brown Head of Finance, Corporate Governance & Risk (Items 9 and 10)

Kari Coghill Director of Enterprise and Communication

Raoul Curtis-Machin Director of Horticulture

Joanne Hannah Director of Resources and Planning and Board Secretary

Pete Hollingsworth Director of Science and Deputy Keeper

Jennifer Martin PA to the Regius Keeper (Minutes)

Jo Marsh Brand Consultant (Presentation on Branding)

Simon Milne Regius Keeper

Rae Vassar Longwood Visiting Fellow (Observer)

**Apologies:** Emma Lacroix Director of Development

| **NO** | **ITEMS** | **ACTION** |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Private Meeting**  The Trustees held a private meeting. |  |
|  | **Presentations**  Branding  The Brand Consultant gave a presentation on the findings of the review they had undertaken on the RBGE’s brand, advised on the review process, (which had built on the work already undertaken in 2022), today’s position, recommendations and next steps. The brand would assist in realising the RBGE’s strategic and charitable objectives, aligning with the Scottish Government’s National Outcomes and further connecting our four sites. RBGE had been benchmarked against other similar organisations and the strengths and opportunities and challenges and threats considered. The brand model used reflected on the name, brand architecture, the core idea and brand narrative, Vision, Mission, Values and Personality. Recommendations for the future evolution of the brand were presented for consideration. A brand workshop would be held and a brand strategy produced. Trustees asked if a different endorsement would be required at the Regional Gardens and were advised that it would have to be endorsed with Edinburgh although different messaging could be used. Trustees asked about the role of education in the brand and it was confirmed that it would be fundamental and a pillar of the RBGE’s work to inspire the next generation.  Strategies for Widespread Adoption of Blue-Green Infrastructure: The Role of Public Horticulture  The Director of Horticulture introduced the Longwood Visiting Fellow who gave a presentation on the importance of blue-green infrastructure (which mimicked the natural environment) in relation to climate change and urbanisation and advised what it was, why it mattered and provided some recommendations. A motivation for blue-green infrastructure projects was improved liveability (ie improved drinking water quality and a reduction in flood risks). The goal was for high quality functioning and nature based vegetated projects in Scotland which would require a multi-organisational response. Investment income could come from public funding and industry. Operational mechanisms included a requirement for a culture change along with construction, maintenance, and monitoring. There were opportunities in Scotland for partnerships but the challenges included a lack of understanding and knowledge. It was noted that current environmental funding was mainly for climate mitigation and not adaptation. Recommendations included legislative, financial, and operational interventions. There was a role for public horticulture and RBGE could provide demonstrations, plant expertise, cultivation, and distribution (ie advising on appropriate plants for blue-green infrastructure). The RBGE’s Rain Garden was an example of a successful pilot project in Scotland. The Trustees noted that the adaptation and protection resonated with the Garden’s Mission and suggested that this could be an opportunity to collate expertise and provide a list of plants for various scenarios (eg Scottish plants that could adapt to weather and climate change would make a unique footprint for RBGE). It was noted that a Scottish Government National Planning Framework had been produced which showed their ambition but no minimum levels had been identified for action. The RBGE were in a unique position to contribute in partnership in this area and the Board of Trustees were content for work to continue and the future role to be considered. The Longwood Fellow would produce a report on their work. |  |
|  | **OPENING ITEMS** |  |
| **1.0** | **Apologies**  Apologies were received from the Director of Development. |  |
| **2.0** | **Trustees’ Conflicts of Interest**  No conflicts of interest related to the meeting were declared. |  |
| **3.0** | **Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on Wednesday 7 December 2022**  The Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 7 December 2022 were accepted as an accurate 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, RBGE Website and circulate by e-mail to the Trustees. | **PA to the**  **Regius Keeper** |
| **4.0** | **Matters Arising**  The Chair reported that the actions from the previous meeting had been completed. |  |
| 4.1 | Investment Committee  The Director of Resources and Planning had arranged for the revised Investment Policy Statement to be signed on behalf of the Board of Trustees, the revised Ethical Investment Policy and the RBGE Treasury Management Policy to be implemented. |  |
| 4.2 | Approval of Annual Report and Accounts for the Year Ended 31 March 2022  The Chair and Regius Keeper had signed the Annual Report and Accounts. The Regius Keeper had written to the Auditor General highlighting concerns about the increasing cost of audit in a time of constrained resources and diminishing operational budgets. A response had been received from Audit Scotland which had been discussed at the Audit Committee Meeting on 15.03.23 and the Regius Keeper would raise the issue with the RBGE’s sponsor body at the Scottish Government. |  |
| 4.3 | Finance Report  The Head of Finance, Corporate Governance and Risk had arranged for the amendments to be made to the authorised signatories on RBS bank accounts. |  |
| 4.4 | Science Advisory Committee - Report of Meeting held Tuesday 6 December 2022  The Chair, on behalf of the Board of Trustees, had written to thank the Staff in the Science Team for their work in obtaining successful grant funding. |  |
| **5.0** | **Chair’s Update**  The Chair advised that:   * He had been involved in the Scottish Government’s selection panel for 3 new Trustees and confirmed that Stella Morse, Cara Aitchison and Elise Cartmell had now been formally appointed to the Board of Trustees by the Scottish Government and their 4 year term of office would start on Saturday 01.04.23. * He had input to the Brand Review discussions. * The First Minister had presented the RBGE Medal to Sandra Diaz at the Scottish Government’s Environmental Committee Meeting on Monday 13.04.23. Sandra Diaz had then visited the RBGE and given a public lecture. * He had agreed with the Scottish Government that he would remain as Chair for an additional 4 years when his first term of office ended in December 2023. |  |
| **6.0**  6.1 | **Regius Keeper**  Update  The Regius Keeper gave an overview and highlighted:   * It had been a very intensive period for the Team from delivering at the front line to all the supporting functions.      * Recent recruitment included some internal promotions to posts and employment of past graduates of RBGE courses. * Scottish Government - There had been engagement with the Scottish Government on the longer-term public service reform, the Environment Public Service Review and preparation of a Systems and Futures (Landscape) Review.  The pay policy for 2023/2024 had been issued and would be considered. Following the change in First Minister the Cabinet appointments were awaited and engagement with new Ministers would ensure the continuing profile raising and promotion of RBGE. * Edinburgh Biomes – The contracts for infrastructure had been signed and work was ongoing to manage the underspends and cash profiles. Work on the Victorian Palm Houses was underway. * Self-Generated Income – With the current financial pressures work was being undertaken on increasing self-generated income with some exciting projects under development (including a US fundraising initiative and enhanced commercial activity). In order to focus even more energy on this area, make the most of our skills in the Executive Team and improve synergies between various functions there would be a change of responsibilities of some of the Directors from the beginning of April 2023. * There had been an impressive number of science grants and highly cited papers. * The Director of Horticulture was addressing a backlog of matters and broadening the increasing engagement and influence within national horticulture policy and practice. * Feedback on our key education courses had been positive. |  |
| 6.2 | Directors’ Highlights |  |
| 6.2.1 | *Resources and Planning*  The Director of Resources and Planning was involved in the public services reform (which would consider shared services, and the development of service model transformation), succession planning of key roles and consideration on improving internal opportunities for the RBGE workforce. The Economic Impact Assessment was going out for tender, and they were leading on the budgeting and Operational Delivery Plan for 2023/2024 and liaising with the Scottish Government on capital budgets for future funding requirements for Edinburgh Biomes. In Education there had been an opportunity for a new Head of Department to expand the reach and impact of the portfolio, and an ongoing focus for investment in a leadership resource for Education continued. |  |
| 6.2.2 | *Science*  The Director of Science and Deputy Keeper advised that 4 new post docs and a Deputy Director of Science (Collections) and Head of the Herbarium had been appointed. Grant funding had been received including the next phase of Scotland’s Plant Health Centre. A workshop would be held with RBGE and Royal Botanic Garden, Kew to consider “what is the nature of plant species”. |  |
| 6.2.3 | *Horticulture*  The Director of Horticulture advised on the decant transplants as part of the Edinburgh Biomes project, the redevelopment of the Queen Mother’s Memorial Garden, there had been some internal recruitment to the Nature Restoration Fund posts, progress was being made on the Garden Master Plans and the Collections Policy was being updated. RBGE were involved in re-established Scottish Government Cross Party Gardening and Horticulture Group and were responding to a consultation on peat consultation and a House of Lords enquiry. At Benmore Botanic Garden works was continuing on the Redwood Avenue and Consultants were undertaking a scoping exercise on future plans for the garden. At Logan Botanic Garden more solar photo voltaic panels were being fitted moving it towards net zero targets. |  |
| 6.2.4 | *Development*  The Regius Keeper advised that the aim was to have approached all major prospective donors for Edinburgh Biomes by the end of the year, the Patron Programme was being relaunched and there were income opportunities in the area of legacies. |  |
| 6.2.5 | *Enterprise and Communication*  The Director of Enterprise and Communication reported that the focus had been on future planning with 3 key themes identified; plant health (Living Soil exhibition in the John Hope Gateway by artist Natalie Taylor following an artist in residency at the RBGE), plant movement (the launch of Shipping Routes exhibition in Inverleith House by artist Keg de Souza) and planting for nature (the launch of Planting with Nature: A Sustainable Gardening book by Kirsty Wilson) developed for 2023. |  |
|  | **DISCUSSION ITEMS** |  |
| **7.0**  7.1  7.2  7.3  7.4  7.5 | **Innovation and Business Development Update**  The Director of Enterprise and Communication gave a presentation.  Botanics Trading Company (BTC)  BTC contributions were gift aided to the RBGE. The plan was to embed innovation and business development across RBGE and there had been a diversification of income generation (hospitality sales, catering, retail, Centre for Middle Eastern Plants and Christmas at the Botanics).  Innovation Stream - The Big Ideas  The ideas had been evaluated using a quadruple bottom line evaluation tool to consider the strategic goals to evaluate the ideas, prioritise the financial return for first 5 years and use £50k+ net profit as a benchmark with a focus on the development of 3-4 ideas for 2023/2024.  Innovation Stream - Staff Innovation  Ideas had been gathered and reviewed with 2 ideas being selected for further development. Many of the ideas were designated business as usual and Staff were encouraged to take these forward.  Strategic Projects  There were projects on brand development and digital transformation.  New Initiatives  Fleurs de Villes a new commercial event would be held in September 2023. There had been a partnership with RBGE Herbology and eteaket (a local tea company) for the development of botanical teas. The Patrick Geddes Room in the John Hope Gateway would be relaunched in April 2023 and the potential to reuse felled larch trees at Benmore Botanic Garden for a bespoke furniture range was being explored. |  |
| **8.0** | **RBGE Risk Exception Report - Spring 2023**  The Director of Resources and Planning advised on changes since the last meeting and the information had been commended by the Audit Committee. There was a focus on training and planning for the Senior Leadership Team and Risk Owners and risks would be interrogated further for mitigation. Two risks had been de-escalated and the issues were managed monthly by the Senior Leadership Team. The Board of Trustees asked if the red risks could be split further to show those that the RBGE could control and those which couldn’t be controlled.  **ACTION:** The Director of Resources and Planning would consider whether it would be possible to split the red risks into those in or out of the RBGE’s control. | **Director of Resources and Planning** |
|  | **DECISION ITEMS** |  |
| **9.0** | **Budget Planning for 2023/2024**  The Head of Finance, Corporate Governance and Risk presented a paper and advised that work had been undertaken with budget holders to reduce the budgeted deficit to the same level as 2022/2023. Communication had been received from the Union regarding the proposed Scottish Government pay remit, and there would be further discussions over the next few months. |  |
|  | **INFORMATION ITEMS** |  |
| **10.0** | **Finance Report 2022/2023 - February 2023**  The Head of Finance, Corporate Governance and Risk presented the Finance Report and highlighted that a balanced position on unrestricted funding was being forecast. Core Capital was being closely monitored to ensure all money was spent by the year end. There was an underspend on Edinburgh Biomes and annuality of Scottish Government funding continued to negatively impact planning and delivery of the programme. |  |
| **11.0** | **Key Results Dashboard – March 2023**  The Director of Resources and Planning presented the Report for information. The Board of Trustees asked for clarification on the self-generated income trend to be included in the narrative for the next meeting. Clarification was requested on the funding pledges to be split into the two funding streams to make it easier to understand and track the current applications and pledges.  **ACTION:** The Director of Resources and Planning would clarify the information in the self-generated income trends and highlight the two funding streams to make it easier to monitor progress and performance. | **Director of Resources and Planning** |
| **12.0** | **Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)**  The Director of Resources and Planning presented a Report prepared by the Head of People and Organisational Development and advised that a new EDI Manager would start in April 2023. |  |
| **13.0** | **Investment Committee – Report of the Meeting held Thursday 16 February 2023**  The Chair of the Investment Committee presented a paper and highlighted the continuing volatile market. The Head of Finance, Corporate Governance and Risk had worked to move funds to an account with a better rate of interest and a strategic review of investments was being undertaken. Governance work being undertaken, and breakdown of US investments had been provided for information. |  |
| **14.0** | **Audit Committee - Report** **of Audit Committee Meeting held Wednesday 15 November 2022**  The Chair of the Audit Committee presented a paper reporting on the meeting held on Wednesday 16 September 2022 for the Board of Trustees’ information. The Audit Committee supported the Regius Keeper taking the issue of the increase in Audit Scotland’s fees to the sponsor team in the Scottish Government. |  |
| **15.0** | **Science Advisory Committee**    The Chair of the Science Advisory Committee advised that a meeting had not been held but the Director of Science and Deputy Keeper had circulated a paper which had reported on the impressive publications’ highlights, awards and income received. |  |
| **16.0** | **Edinburgh Biomes Oversight Committee – Key Discussions and Minutes of Previous Meetings**  The Director of Resources and Planning advised that the Head of Edinburgh Biomes had prepared a report of the discussions held at the Edinburgh Biomes Oversight Committee meeting with a summary of key discussions, events, and issues over the last quarter. Work was underway on the Palm Houses and tendering for the Energy Centre was being considered. The construction market was buoyant which constrained the tender process. |  |
|  | **CLOSING ITEMS** |  |
| **17.0** | **Any Other Business**  There were no additional items to report. |  |
| **18.0** | **Arrangements for the Next Meeting**  The next meeting would be held on Thursday 29 June 2023 at the North West Castle Hotel, Stranraer. |  |

**Jennifer Martin**

PA to the Regius Keeper

29 March 2023

**Annex A** Summary of Actions

**ANNEX A**

**SUMMARY OF ACTIONS**

| **NO** | **ITEMS** | **ACTION** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **3.0** | **Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on Wednesday 7 December 2022**  **ACTION:** The PA to the Regius Keeper would place a copy of the approved Minutes in the Library, on the General Drive, RBGE Website and circulate by e-mail to the Trustees. | **PA to the**  **Regius Keeper** |
| **8.0** | **RBGE Risk Exception Report - Spring 2023**  **ACTION:** The Director of Resources and Planning would consider whether it would be possible to split the red risks into those in or out of the RBGE’s control. | **Director of Resources and Planning** |
| **11.0** | **Key Results Dashboard – March 2023**  **ACTION:** The Director of Resources and Planning would clarify the information in the self-generated income trends and clarify the self-generated income position and considering splitting them into the 2 funding streams to make it easier to view. | **Director of Resources and Planning** |