



Minutes of the Arts Working Group
1430 - 1700 on Tuesday 14 February 2017
in the Board Room, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE)
20A Inverleith Row, Edinburgh EH3 5LR

Present:	Professor Chris Breward Janet Archer Ms Patricia Barclay Simon Dessain Jacqueline Donachie Rachel Hillman Professor Mary Gibby Phil Long Simon Milne Kirstie Skinner	Principal ECA (Chair) Chief Executive Creative Scotland Convenor of the Edinburgh Friends RBGE Chief Executive The List Items 1-7 Artist Public Engagement Team Wellcome Trust by telecon Former Director of Science RBGE/Honorary Fellow RBGE by SKYPE Director V&A Dundee Items 1-6 Regius Keeper RBGE Director Outset Scotland
In attendance:	Amanda Catto Ian Edwards Chloe Reith	Head of Visual Arts Creative Scotland/Secretariat Head of Public Engagement RBGE/Secretariat Assistant Curator of Exhibitions RBGE/Secretariat
Apologies:	Fiona Bradley Sir John Leighton Lisa LeFeuvre Dr Henrietta Lidchi Diana Murray Dame Seona Reid Robert Wilson	Director Fruitmarket Gallery Director General NGS Head of Sculpture Studies Henry Moore Foundation Keeper of World Cultures NMS Trustee RBGE Director Jupiter Artland/Nelsons

NO **ITEMS** **ACTION**

1.0 **Welcome and Introductions**

1.1 The Chair welcomed the group to the first meeting of the Arts Working Group whose role is to advise the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE) Board of Trustees on the strategic direction of the RBGE arts programme. Members were thanked for giving up their time to this project.

2.0 **Background to the Project and Operational Context**

2.1 Simon Milne added his welcome and provided an overview of RBGE and the context for the establishment of the Arts Working Group.

- a. RBGE is one of four world leading botanical institutes, with the mission to “explore, conserve and explain the world of plants for a better future”.

NO ITEMS**ACTION**

- b. Its National Collections are maintained as a research, education and heritage resource, and comprised of a plant collection of over 13,000 species in its four gardens, a herbarium of 3 million specimens and an extensive botanical library and archive.
- c. RBGE is a Non Departmental Public Body, with the Scottish Government being the main funder (from the Department for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform). Its remit is set out in an Act of Parliament and covers plant research, maintaining and developing the national collections, education and engaging the public with the National Collections.
- d. Its plant science and conservation programmes are focussed on reducing the loss of global biodiversity and generating a greater understanding of plants, fungi and environmental sustainability. This is within the context that approximately 30% of plant species are threatened with extinction and there are an estimated 70,000 species awaiting discovery and description. RBGE is working in partnership with 35 countries worldwide
- e. Its education programme includes engagement with primary, secondary and higher education, with international post graduate programmes, and on-line courses reaching a global audience.
- f. The public engagement programme is aligned to the RBGE mission. Events and exhibitions cover a broad spectrum of the arts and crafts, science, horticulture, conservation and community engagement. Income generation from events is becoming increasingly important. It is believed that only the New York Botanical Garden has an arts programme as diverse as that of RBGE. RBGE attracts 900,000 visits a year.
- g. There is a wide range of venues for exhibitions and events within RBGE, including the gardens, the John Hope Gateway, the Glasshouses, Inverleith House, and some spaces within the buildings of the three Regional Gardens.
- h. Inverleith House is a Georgian mansion that has previously been used as a private residence, as a home for the the Scottish Gallery of Modern Art and more recently as a venue for RBGE's self-directed exhibitions programme.
- i. RBGE continues to face budget pressures that require it to ensure resources are directed to core activities, to increase self-generated income and to maximise the return from its assets.
- j. Financial pressures have led to some reductions in core activity and necessitated a careful look at the funding and running of activities that could be classified as non-core.

- k. These internal financial pressures, coupled with the challenges of securing external funding for the arts programme at Inverleith House raised questions about the future sustainability of a dedicated programme of contemporary art. . This programme was considered by Trustees to be non- core and with only 2.5% of garden visitors going to Inverleith House the return to RBGE in terms of increasing footfall, engaging and inspiring visitors, and income generation was considered low. .
- l. With a grant from Creative Scotland a report ‘A Future for Inverleith House’ was commissioned from Kelly and Co to consider options for a more sustainable approach to arts programming, The RBGE’s Board of Trustees considered this Report at their meeting in October 2016 and concluded that the financial model and figures proposed were high risk, further significant investment would be required and that there were untested assumptions about partnership support and funding
- m. The RBGE’s Board of Trustees agreed unanimously that Inverleith House would no longer be dedicated solely to a programme of contemporary art; that RBGE would continue to include arts events and exhibitions in its programme, and that it would discuss the future programme and the potential for funding with Creative Scotland. The Regius Keeper was tasked to investigate the future use of Inverleith House as part of the drive to increase income/make financial savings.
- n. The Board noted that Inverleith House had built up an excellent reputation as a contemporary art gallery and had contributed much to the Scottish art scene. However, the need to focus resources on core botanical and horticultural activities, to reduce financial risk and costs, and to increase income meant that it was no longer appropriate for RBGE to maintain a dedicated contemporary art gallery within the Edinburgh garden.
- o. Concerns over the decision were raised by parts of the arts community and were accompanied by wide media coverage. There then followed discussions between RBGE, the Scottish Government and Creative Scotland at which it was agreed to establish a short life Arts Working Group to advise the RBGE Board on the strategic direction of its programme for arts and cultural engagement across RBGE that would include, but not be restricted to, exhibition making at Inverleith House.
- p. RBGE looks forward to gaining expert advice on a future vision and strategic direction for its programme that would be in harmony with its mission, inspire visitors and amplify its role as a world leading botanical institute and holder of national collections.

NO	ITEMS	ACTION
2.2	<p>The group then had an open and productive discussion about the role of RBGE, its arts programme and Inverleith House. Views and points raised included:</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The contemporary art shown in Inverleith House was an asset to the RBGE and Scotland and frequently received much critical acclaim. b. A disconnect had developed between the contemporary art shown in Inverleith House and the role of the RBGE, with the result that the gallery was not fully integrated into the broader operation of RBGE. c. Visitors learned and engaged with the RBGE in different ways and art was one form of communication. Inverleith House had attracted a different type of audience to other areas of the RBGE some of whom wouldn't have visited if it wasn't for a particular exhibition. d. Increasing the number of visitors to the Gallery would have a positive impact on income generation in other parts of the RBGE operation. e. The experience of art has a value beyond immediate financial concerns that enhances public engagement and understanding across disciplines and sectors. f. There are opportunities for new partnerships and potential cross-over with different audiences. g. There are other visitor attractions, institutes and universities where art does not form part of the core activity, but where it is employed successfully to inform different ways of thinking and working. It would be helpful to investigate such organisations to see if there are models that could be used by RBGE. h. The Arts Working Group has an advocacy role to articulate the value of what could be achieved from having a visionary arts programme, and how engagement with the arts and creativity could provide added value to RBGE's impact. i. It would be important to benchmark against other organisations to provide examples and indicators of what would be possible within the context of RBGE j. Visionary thinking would be required that encompassed the full range of the arts and creative engagement as described in the group's Terms of Reference. 	

NO	ITEMS	ACTION
	<p>k. It would be important that any future investment in RBGE’s art programme provided a good return in terms of income and/or public value and organisational impact.</p> <p>l. There would be scope to “pilot” new ways of working to assess their feasibility.</p> <p>m. It would be essential to foster an open dialogue between the Arts Working Group and the Board of Trustees and, at appropriate stages in the development of the strategy, to jointly test assumptions and ideas.</p>	

3.0 Terms of Reference for Discussion and Final Approval

3.1 The Terms of Reference were approved. For clarification, the Arts Working Group would explore the scope and provide strategic advice on a future programme of arts and creative engagement but it would be for the RBGE’s curatorial team to develop and deliver the programme. There is an ambition for the programme to take account of the 4 RBGE sites although it is understood that in terms of exhibition making the garden in Edinburgh is the focus.

3.1.1 **ACTION:** The Secretariat will arrange for information to be given on the scope and opportunities for an arts programme at the Regional Gardens at the next meeting. **Secretariat**

4.0 Desired/Anticipated Outputs and Outcomes

4.1 The Chair stressed the need to clarify the outputs and outcomes of the Arts Working Group. The following points were raised and discussed.

- The Arts Working Group will work towards providing a high level strategic paper for consideration by the Board of Trustees at their meeting in June 2017, noting that the strategy would cover arts in the general sense and in all venues.
- The Board of Trustees have requested a strategic direction for the RBGE’s arts programme which would be world class, sustainable, aligned to the mission and add value to its impact and profile.
- Opportunities for partnership working should be considered and the Arts Working Group would investigate a number of different examples of partnerships and collaborations that could be relevant..
- Joint exhibitions with other organisations could create increased footfall.
- Opportunities for external funding should be identified.

NO	ITEMS	ACTION
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There is significant potential for RBGE to develop a programme that enables and invites artists to respond and contribute to the RBGE’s core mission, through research, residency and exhibition making. ▪ A case for the reconnection of ‘contemporary creativity’ should be prepared which reflects the Garden’s Vision and Mission to increase the relevance and impact of the arts programme. This could assist with resourcing the programme and ensure that Inverleith House is better integrated into RBGE’s core activities. ▪ The Arts Working Group will need to articulate a vision that embraces a ‘holistic’ approach arts programming and creative engagement across RBGE 	

5.0 Methodology, Key Tasks and Approach

5.1 Discussions on the approach to be taken concluded that the Arts Working Group should:

- Begin to articulate vision and core objectives for an arts and creative engagement programme for the next meeting and consider begin to explore how this would align with partners.
- Undertake a benchmarking exercise that could help to inform the development of the strategy by revealing successful and sustainable projects, providing an outline direction for art in the garden, showing how an arts programme could add value and show how an understanding of contemporary creativity could be used to deliver the vision of an organisation. A plan would be developed in a further session and the Secretariat would consider how best to do this.
- Promote the concept that art was a process used to make sense of things and not just objects to view. It was noted that all Members brought different experiences and expertise to the Arts Working Group.
- Identify key experts within the fields of art and science, within RBGE and beyond, that would be consulted in order to deepen the knowledge base and inform future thinking. Paul Nesbitt (Curator of Exhibitions) was to be included in this list as were the key members of the campaign to support Inverleith House.
- Secretariat should research potential sources of funds for the future programme, for consideration by the Arts Working Group.

5.1.1 **ACTION:** All would consider potential case studies that could be used to inform the Board of Trustees. **All**

NO	ITEMS	ACTION
5.1.2	ACTION: Secretariat to research sources of funding for a future programme.	Secretariat
5.2	Consultations with individuals in the appropriate parts of the arts environment would be undertaken in order to receive their views on a future arts programme. A list of people with whom the Arts Working Group would like to consult will be prepared.	
5.2.1	ACTION: All to consider potential individuals to be approached for consultation on the future arts and creative engagement programme at the RBGE.	All
5.3	The next summer exhibition in Inverleith House was currently being developed and information would be provided to the Arts Working Group at their next meeting.	
5.3.1	ACTION: Chloe Reith would give a short presentation on the proposals for the summer exhibition in Inverleith House at the next meeting.	Chloe Reith
6.0	<u>Timeline/Date of Future Meetings</u>	
6.1	The timelines, as listed in the Terms of Reference, was confirmed as follows:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A verbal update by the Regius Keeper to the Board of Trustees at their meeting on Monday 27 February 2017. ▪ A written interim Report to the Board of Trustees by the end of March 2017. ▪ A written Report to the Board of Trustees at their meeting on Tuesday 21 June 2017. 	
6.2	Dates for future Arts Working Group meetings would be arranged in March and May 2017.	
6.2.1	ACTION: Jennifer Martin to arrange future Arts Working Group meetings in March and May 2017.	Jennifer Martin
7.0	<u>Communications</u>	
7.1	It was agreed that there would be no added value to issuing a Press Release following this meeting as the critical information at this stage was contained in the Terms of Reference which were available on the RBGE website. Future communications would normally come from the Chair of the Arts Working Group. RBGE press office would coordinate any future media activity and would develop a communications plan assisted by Creative Scotland.	

NO	ITEMS	ACTION
7.1.1	ACTION: The approved minutes of this meeting would be put on-line (www.rbge.org.uk)	Jennifer Martin
7.2	Key conclusions from this meeting would be summarised for the members of the Arts Working Group to aid the passage of information about the work of the Group	
7.2.1	ACTION: The Chair would work with the Secretariat to articulate the key conclusions for dissemination to members of the Arts Working Group.	Chair/ Secretariat

Jennifer Martin
PA to the Regius Keeper
17 February 2017

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

NO	ITEMS	ACTION
3.0	<u>Terms of Reference for Discussion and Final Approval</u>	
3.1.1	ACTION: The Secretariat will arrange for information to be given on the scope and opportunities for an arts programme at the Regional Gardens at the next meeting.	Secretariat
5.0	<u>Methodology, Key Tasks and Approach</u>	
5.1.1	ACTION: All would consider potential case studies that could be used to inform the Board of Trustees.	All
5.1.2	ACTION: Secretariat to research sources of funding for a future programme.	Secretariat
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7.3.1	ACTION: The Chair would work with the Secretariat to articulate the key conclusions for dissemination to members of the Arts Working Group.	Chair/ Secretariat