ROYAL BOTANIC GARDEN EDINBURGH BOARD OF TRUSTEES

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Trustees**

**held in the Botanic Cottage, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE)**

**on Wednesday 7 December 2016 at 1400**

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

Prof Beverley Glover Trustee

Mrs Patricia Henton Trustee

Prof Thomas Meagher Trustee

Ms Diana Murray Trustee

Mr Tim Rollinson Trustee

Prof Ian Wall Trustee

Mr Chris Wallace Trustee

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

Prof Pete Hollingsworth Director of Science

Mrs Heather Jackson Director of Enterprise

Dr Alasdair Macnab Director of Corporate Services Secretary

Mr Kevin Reid Director of Horticulture and Learning

Ms Ann Robertson Head of Finance

Ms Janet Archer Chief Executive (Creative Scotland) – Item 1 only

Ms Leonie Bell Director, Arts & Engagement

(Creative Scotland) – Item 1 only

| Item | Narrative & Decisions | Action |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Visit to Nursery Glasshouses**  Prior to the meeting the Board of Trustees visited the Alpine House (under re-construction) and the Arid Lands Glasshouse, and viewed the Upper Woodland.  **Private Meeting**  The Chairman, Board of Trustees and Regius Keeper held a Private Meeting prior to the Main Board meeting. |  |
|  | **DISCUSSION ITEM:** |  |
| **1.0**  1.1 | **Update on Inverleith House, Working Group and Future Programme**  The Chairman welcomed Janet Archer and Leonie Bell to the meeting. Following the decision taken at the previous meeting that Inverleith House would no longer be dedicated to contemporary art, draft Terms of Reference had been prepared for a Working Group which would be established to advise the Board of Trustees on the strategic direction of the RBGE programme for arts and cultural engagement. Discussions were ongoing with a potential Chair of the Group and further development of the Terms of Reference would await input from the Chair, when appointed. Trustees emphasised that the strategy should be aligned with the RBGE mission and must be achievable and sustainable within the current financial climate. It was also emphasised that there would be no reconsideration of the decision that Inverleith House would no longer be dedicated to contemporary art. The Working Group would provide the Board of Trustees with an update at the next meeting of the Board (March 2017) and an outline strategy would be presented for consideration at the June 2017 Board meeting. Creative Scotland and the Trustees agreed that it was important to ascertain shared areas of strategic interest between the two organisations and that this would be considered by the Working Group. Creative Scotland stressed support for the Working Group and advocated that expectations of stakeholders would need to be managed, particularly on the future use of Inverleith House. It was agreed that the Working Group should look at funding opportunities including potential partnerships with businesses. Trustees considered that the Working Group was a good opportunity to take a strategic view of the art in the Garden, increase visitor numbers and income and to engage a broader audience with art. It was suggested that the remit of the Group included engaging visitors with poetry, as well as the visual and performing arts, and it was reaffirmed that RBGE should remain a leading centre for Botanical Art. |  |
|  | **OPENING ITEMS:** |  |
| **2.0**  2.1 | **Minutes of the Previous Meeting held Thursday 5 October 2016**  The Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday 5 October 2016 had previously been accepted as a true record of the meeting. The Secretary had placed a copy of the approved Minutes in the Library, on the General Drive, the RBGE Website and circulated by e-mail to the Board of Trustees. |  |
| **3.0**  3.1 | **Matters Arising**  Update on Estates Strategy  The Secretary reported that work on the Strategy was progressing, but was taking longer than originally envisaged. The long term strategy for buildings and maintenance would now include consideration of the future requirements for the Herbarium. |  |
| **4.0**  4.1  4.2  4.3 | **Chairman’s Report**  “Financing the Future” Paper for the Scottish Government  Following discussions at the previous meeting the Chairman had written to the Director General Economy at the Scottish Government and a response was awaited.  Update on Recruitment of Trustees  A revised Skills Matrix and Terms of Reference had been submitted to the Scottish Government and a response was awaited.  Report from Impact Panel Meeting  There had been no meeting of the Impact Panel since the previous Board meeting. It was noted that the Chairman and Regius Keeper would attend a Main Research Providers Directors’ Executive Committee Dinner on Tuesday 13 December 2016. |  |
| **5.0**  5.1 | **Regius Keeper’s Report**  The Regius Keeper presented his quarterly report and highlighted the following items:   * The gapping of posts to meet savings targets was starting to have a negative impact on operational output and staff morale. * The RBGE had achieved the Athena SWAN Research Institute Bronze Award. * International cooperation was developing well with China, Nepal and Colombia. A High Level meeting (part of the State Visit of the President of Colombia to the UK) to discuss the ‘Colombia Bio’ project had included representatives from the RBGE and had recognised RBGE’s considerable expertise in the region. Discussions were now taking place to develop a partnership with Kew to further the botanical elements of the project. * The Scottish Government’s Centre for Knowledge Exchange and Innovation (CKEI) was fully operational and the RBGE had bids for funds to deliver relevant parts of the programme – including a biodiversity “Think Tank” and public engagement. * The Regius Keeper was now a member of the Scottish Government’s Rural Affairs, Food and Environment (Rural Affairs, Food and Environment Delivery Board) Delivery Board. * The Staff Conference would take place during the day on Thursday 26 January 2017. * The Public Open Evening would take place in the evening of Wednesday 15 March 2017. * Notification of a legacy of £972,434 had been received. The terms of the bequest was that funding would be restricted to medicinal plant research and it was likely that it would come as an endowment. The legacy was expected to be received in March 2017. * The Scottish Government had agreed to fund works to provide a mains water supply at Benmore Botanic Garden. * The Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) had launched a Herbology programme to meet growing (global) demand for the subject. * RBGE was working with Botanic Garden Conservation International (BGCI) on an Erasmus funded education project. * The book ‘Plants from the Woods and Forests of Chile’ had sold out |  |
| 5.2 | There was a brief discussion, and the Board congratulated the Regius Keeper and his colleagues on the impressive record of achievement he had set out. |  |
|  | **DISCUSSION ITEMS:** |  |
| **6.0**  6.1 | **2017/2018 Business Plan and High Level Budget**  The Secretary had circulated an update on the 2017/18 Budget prior to the meeting for Trustees’ information. Information from the Scottish Government on the RBGE’s allocation was expected on Friday 16 December 2016. Directors would work on the budget in the new year and would inform Trustees if there were any significant issues that required their collective consideration and advised that an additional Trustees’ meeting would be arranged if required. It was noted that regardless of any reduction in Grant-in-Aid and the continued increase in self-generated income, it was likely that significant savings would be required due to rising costs. |  |
| **7.0**  7.1 | **RBGE’s Biodiversity Science in Scotland**  The Director of Science introduced a presentation on the Scottish Research Programme which had as its key themes species discovery and monitoring, environmental change and scenario planning, ecological/genetic analysis for species recovery and education, outreach and public participation. The Scottish Plants Conservation Officer gave a presentation on ‘Landscape Scale Conservation of Epiphytes in Temperate Rainforests’. |  |
|  | **INFORMATION ITEMS:** |  |
| **8.0**  8.1  8.2 | **Finance**  Finance Update  The Head of Finance reported on the RBGE forecast for 2016/17 and commented that in addition to the excellent financial performance of Botanic Lights, the drive to bring in additional research funding was helping to mitigate the potential deficit through the provision of salary recharges.  Finance Report for the Period to 31 October 2016  The Head of Finance provided her report for information. |  |
| **9.0**  9.1  9.2 | **Capital Projects Update**  The Secretary reported that there had been an accident with a temporary boiler installed by the Contractors next to the North East Corner Glasshouses and as a result the work to remove asbestos from the Boiler Room had been postponed until the summer of 2017 avoiding the need to hire a temporary boiler. The work on the refurbishment of the pond at Logan Botanic Garden had been completed and work had started on the pond in the John Hope Gateway Biodiversity Garden. Final snagging works to the Botanic Cottage were being undertaken and a final cost had now been agreed which meant that the RBGE would only draw down approximately £40k of the £100k requested from the Botanics Foundation. Trustees suggested that it would be good practice for future works for the North East Corner (NEC) to use a Project Manager and Quantity Surveyor from different companies - at present both positions came from Arcadis.  **Decision.** It was agreed that:  The Secretary would consider using a Project Manager and Quantity Surveyor from different companies for the future North East Corner works. | Secretary |
| **10.0**  10.1 | **Report of the Audit Committee**  The Chair of the Audit Committee reported that they had received two Audit Reports from the Internal Auditors (Henderson Loggie) on ‘Creditors/Purchasing (Policy and Practice)’ and ‘Expenses (Policy and Practice)’ and RBGE Management had found both helpful. There was nothing significant to report. |  |
| **11.0**  11.1 | **Report of the Science Advisory Committee**  Prof Tom Meagher (Chairman of the Science Advisory Committee) reported that there had been no meetings since the last Board of Trustees’ meeting. The next meeting would be held on Thursday 8 December 2016 where they would consider plant health, Nepal (the Global Challenges funding application) and Digitisation. |  |
| **12.0**  12.1 | **Report of the Botanic Foundation**  The Regius Keeper reported that a meeting was held on Friday 18 November 2016 which was Mr David Nicolson’s last as Chair. Ms Lorna Stoddard, an experienced fundraiser, had taken over as interim Chair. The More Partnership had prepared a document ‘A New Approach to Fundraising – Progress Report’ which had been circulated to the Trustees prior to the meeting. Trustees suggested that one fundraising theme could emphasise our science programmes linked to our collections, perhaps using a strapline of ‘Garden of Hope’. Grants had been approved for £25k to help the development of the front of house area at Benmore Botanic Garden and it had been noted that £50k may be requested between meetings to improve the front of house area in the John Hope Gateway. |  |
| **13.0**  13.1  13.2 | **Risk Register – Review of Red Risks**  The Secretary reported that following discussions at the last meeting Trustees’ comments had been taken into account and an updated Risk Register was now presented. The North East Corner actions had been completed and a Business Case was being developed and as no further work was being undertaken the risk level had been reduced. Trustees questioned whether the risk on ‘Failure to control and react to known pathogens and identify new plant health diseases/outbreaks’ needed to have two “risk owners”. It was suggested that this risk could be owned by the Director of Horticulture and Learning but with the input from the Director of Science.  **Decision.** It was agreed that:  The Secretary would consider amending the ownership of the risk on ‘Failure to control and react to known pathogens and identify new plant health diseases/outbreaks’. | Secretary |
|  | **CLOSING ITEMS:** |  |
| **14.0**  14.1 | **Any Other Business**  Review of the Ground Floor of the John Hope Gateway  The Regius Keeper reported that a review, led by the Head of Public Engagement, would be undertaken to consider immediate fixes to issues and then the longer term layout of the ground floor area in the John Hope Gateway would be considered in an effort to increase income generation and improve the visitor experience. |  |
| **15.0**  15.1 | **Arrangements for the Next Meeting**  The next meeting would be in the afternoon of Monday 27 February 2017 in the Conference Room, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, 20A Inverleith Row, Edinburgh EH3 5LR. |  |

**Jennifer Martin**

PA to the Regius Keeper

13 January 2017