

**Minutes of the 164th Meeting of the**

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

**on Wednesday 29 June 2022 at 1430**

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

**Present:** Dominic Fry Chair of Trustees

Sarah Cathcart Trustee

Beverley Glover Trustee and Chair of the Science Advisory Committee

(part attendance)

David Hamilton Trustee

Ian Jardine Trustee and Chair of the Audit Committee

Liz Trevor Trustee

Ian Wall Trustee and Chair of the Investment Committee

**In Attendance:** Ian Brown Head of Finance, Corporate Governance & Risk (Item 7)

Kari Coghill Director of Enterprise and Communication

Alan Elliot Biodiversity Conservation Network Manager (Item 12.2)

Joanne Hannah Director of Resources and Planning and Board Secretary

Meena Jagait Board Shadow

Jennifer Martin PA to the Regius Keeper (Minutes)

Simon Milne Regius Keeper

Duncan Reddish Head of Digital, Technology and Information Services

(Item 12.1)

Steven Poliri Director of Estates and Facilities

**Apologies:** Sarah Gurr Trustee

Pete Hollingsworth Director of Science and Deputy Keeper

Emma Lacroix Director of Development

| **NO** | **ITEMS** | **ACTION** |
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|  | **Private Meeting**  Following a visit to Dawyck Botanic Garden in the morning the Board of Trustees held a private meeting prior to the Main Board Meeting where the following had been discussed:   * RBGE to take a holistic view of the available land for development at Dawyck Botanic Garden and link to the delivery of strategic objectives. * There was the potential for greater use of on-line maps for Visitors to the Gardens. * Targets should be implemented for the procurement of electric vehicles and tools. * The Board of Trustees would like to have occasional updates from the Curators as part of their presentation programme. |  |
|  | **OPENING ITEMS** |  |
| **1.0** | **Apologies**  Apologies were received from Sarah Gurr, the Director of Science and Deputy Keeper and 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 2 March 2022**  The Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 2 March 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. |  |
| **5.0** | **Chair’s Update**  The Chair highlighted a few recent engagements.   * He had spoken on public funding for the RBGE at the Science Edinburgh Provocation Session. * He had attended the People’s Postcode Lottery Gala Dinner with the Director of Development and also attended a dinner hosted by Heritage Portfolio. * He had hosted a donor engagement afternoon tea in the Botanic Cottage in support of Edinburgh Biomes. * He had attended the Regius Keepers first Summer Garden Party which had been held in the John Hope Gateway. * He had provided a welcome at the Regius Keeper’s virtual Staff Update Meeting.   The Chair also advised that he was very impressed with the RBGE’s level of strategic and operational ambition over the past year |  |
| **6.0**  6.1 | **Regius Keeper**  Update  The Regius Keeper gave an overview and highlighted that:   * The Scottish Government had advised on 4-year, indicative, Grant-in Aid for RBGE’s which may require savings of approximately 12% through year-on year 3% “efficiencies”. The Scottish Government had also indicated that the salaries budget for Grant-in-Aid funded staff could be capped at this year’s (2022/2023) level and the RBGE would need to absorb any future pay rises (which were set by the Scottish Government pay policy). The Regius Keeper said that whilst it was helpful to have a longer term forecast of Grant-in-Aid he expressed his concern on the proposed financial cuts, and the challenge of achieving effective and realistic budget management given that pay policy was largely out with the control of RBGE and while there was a no-compulsory redundancy policy. He would keep the Board of Trustees informed of the situation. * There had been an encouraging increase in self-generated income and a candidate had been appointment to the new post Head of Innovation and Business Development. There were potential new overseas business opportunities (linked to RBGE’s Mission). He confirmed that the Board of Trustees would be consulted prior to any contracts being agreed where “due diligence” indicated any reputational risk. It was suggested that press statements be prepared, which would explain the context and outcomes of significant work by RBGE in politically sensitive parts of the world. * A new Chair and two new Trustees had been appointed to the Botanics Foundation. This was a major boost to the Foundation’s aim of increasing philanthropic income. * Some restructuring would take place in the Science Division which would provide additional support and management expertise, and improve the efficiency and outputs of the Division. * Recruitment was underway for Director of Horticulture and future leadership arrangements in Education were being considered. * Work on finalising Edinburgh Biomes contracts for the renovation of the Palm Houses was advancing, but the need to remain flexible with programme planning was emphasised, given significant construction cost issues across the sector. The senior manager responsible for the for Edinburgh Biomes would be Amy Murray on the departure of Steven Poliri, in a redefined role of Head of Edinburgh Biomes. * There had been some national press interest and interviews in relation to the release of the Racial Justice Report. This had usefully highlighted the publication and desired outcomes of the Report. |  |
| 6.2  6.2.1  6.2.2  6.2.3  6.2.4 | Directors’ Highlights  The Regius Keeper invited the Directors to provide brief updates on key activities.  *Estates and Facilities*  The Chair, on behalf of the Board of Trustees, thanked the Director of Estates and Facilities for all that had been undertaken during his time at RBGE. The Director of Estates and Facilities had been a great asset and the Chair wished him all the best in his new role.  The Director of Estates and Facilities highlighted that there had been difficult contractual discussions relating to Edinburgh Biomes as the market was very challenging at present. The Palm House contract would be signed off and work was expected to start in August/September 2022. A decision on a funding application for £500k to Historic Environment Scotland was expected soon. The Scottish Government had agreed to provide additional £9.9M in 2023/2024 to address the unavoidable £10m underspend in 2022/23. There would be programming and funding challenges for the later stages of the project, which were currently being re-assed.  *Resources and Planning*  The Director of Resources and Planning advised that the focus was on capital planning with an £8.2M allocation over the next 4 years. The Resources Spending Review had highlighted efficiency savings and critical income channels opportunities. Education had moved to the Director of Resources and Planning temporarily until agreement on leadership of this function was confirmed. Leadership of Estates and Facilities would move to Resources and Planning from July 2022.  *Enterprise and Communication*  The Director of Enterprise and Communication reported that Visitor numbers had exceeded the 2019 figures, secondary spend was good and hospitality was doing very well. £40k of funding had been received from VisitScotland for the Year of Scotland’s Stories and the Botanics Foundation had donated £20k. A successful Rhododendron exhibition had been held in Inverleith House. Interest from broadcast media had been good including filming for the Antiques Roadshow and a programme by Mary Berry, and wide horticultural/research coverage. Executive responsibility for Horticulture had temporarily moved to the Director of Enterprise and Communication temporarily until the new Director of Horticulture had been appointed. The *Amorphophallus titanum* (titan arum) had flowered again with much celebration in social media. The dry spring was impacting on the plant collections with a significant increase in irrigation. There were continuing plant health challenges, and work was ongoing with the new plant records database Iris. COVID was still impacting on some front of house operations.  *Science*  The Regius Keeper highlighted:   * A green paper was about to be launched on a plant biodiversity strategy for Scotland - RBGE was working with NatureScot to ensure plant biodiversity was adequately conserved in Scotland and prominent in the wider Scottish Biodiversity Strategy. * The Biodiversity COP (COP15) had now officially moved from Kunming China, to be held in Montreal Canada in December 2022. Work was now underway to assess how best RBGE could  contribute to this important biodiversity policy meeting. * A submission was going to Wellcome Trust to extend funding for the Darwin Tree of Life Project to ensure continuity on genome sequencing biota in Britain and Ireland. * A highly successful meeting of the Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections had been held in Edinburgh with 613 delegates from over 40 countries (about 450 people attending in person, and 170 online) which brought together the state of the art in the management, conservation and utilisation of natural history collections. * There was rising uncertainty about future eligibility of the UK to Horizon Europe. A recent large Biodiversity Genomics Europe grant to RBGE was covered by an underwrite from the UK Research Councils but the potential for eligibility to future funding rounds would cease from the end of this year which would have a significant opportunity cost. * Recruitment was underway for Head of International Conifer Conservation Programme, a Deputy Director (Collections), a Taxonomy Research Leader, and a new Zingiberaceae Researcher. |  |
|  | **DECISION ITEMS** |  |
| **7.0** | **Project Gladiolus**  The Regius Keeper and Director of Enterprise and Communication presented a paper.  **ACTION:** The Regius Keeper and Director of Enterprise and Communication would amend the paper and re-present it to the Board, with a view to its submission to the Scottish Government later in the year. | **Regius Keeper/**  **Director of Enterprise and Communication** |
|  | **DISCUSSION ITEMS** |  |
| **8.0** | **Edinburgh Biomes Oversight Committee – Key Discussions and Minutes of Previous Meetings**  The Director of Estates and Facilities presented a report of Edinburgh Biomes Oversight Committee and a summary of key discussions, events and issues over the last quarter. Following the departure of the Director of Estates and Facilities the internal management of Edinburgh Biomes would move to a new Head of Edinburgh Biomes post in the Director of Resources and Planning’s area. The Board of Trustees asked about the available capacity to manage this. They were reassured that a new Project Manager was to be recruited and capacity would be monitored and addressed if necessary. Alternative delivery options were being considered and there were opportunities to refurbish and reuse some of the existing buildings instead of demolishing and rebuilding them; this was currently being costed and taken through governance. |  |
| **9.0** | **RBGE Risk Exception Report Summer 2022**  The Director of Resources and Planning presented the Report to keep the Board of Trustees appraised of the current risks and associated actions. |  |
| **10.0** | **Key Results Dashboard – FY 2021/2022**  The Director of Resources and Planning presented the Key Results Dashboard for February 2022 with accompanying RBGE Key Results Report. The Board of Trustees suggested that the information in the charts that compared progress with previous years could be presented in a clearer way.  **ACTION:** The Director of Resources and Planning would amend the information in the charts to present the yearly comparison information in a clearer way. | **Director of Resources and Planning** |
| **11.0**  11.1  11.2 | **Finance**  Botanics Trading Company – Letter of Support  The Chair agreed to sign the letter.  **ACTION:** The Head of Finance, Corporate Governance and Risk would arrange for the Chair of sign the Botanics Trading Company Letter of Support.    Finance Report to 31 March 2022  The Head of Finance, Corporate Governance and Risk presented the 2021/2022 Report and highlighted that RBGE revenue performance achieved an approximate neutral position at the year end. Botanics Trading Company profit was 30% up on budget which was partly due to a successful Christmas at the Botanics event. The Botanics Trading Company audit was underway with no issues to report. The core capital funding had been fully invested. | **Head of Finance, Corporate Governance and Risk** |
|  | **INFORMATION ITEMS** |  |
| **12.0**  12.1  12.2 | **Presentations**  Cyber Security  The Head of Digital, Technology and Information Services gave a presentation and updated Board of Trustees on technology (the challenges and RBGE’s responses to threats), people (introduced the Digital Team, talked about user level and executive level awareness), highlighted the lessons learned from the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) cyber attack and advised on the Digital Strategy which was being prepared. Trustees welcomed this insight and were supportive of the approach being taken.  Global Rhododendron Conservation Consortium  The Biodiversity Conservation Network Manager gave a presentation and updated Board of Trustees with an overview of the RBGE and Rhododendron, Botanic Garden Conservation International (BGCI) Global Conservation Consortia and the Global Conservation Consortium for Rhododendron. Trustees expressed their gratitude for an informative presentation on an important conservation programme. |  |
| **13.0** | **Strategic Workforce Review Summary**  The Director of Resources and Planning highlighted some of the recommended actions for consideration including marketing and communications capabilities, investments in learning and development, consideration of the composition of the Executive Team and a review of the membership and remit of the Senior Leadership Team. This had been a useful exercise and an opportunity to engage with the workforce and governing body, and to help plan workforce needs for the future to underpin delivery of the RBGE strategy. |  |
| **14.0** | **Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)**  The EDI Manager had prepared a report for the Board of Trustees’ Information. The Director of Resources and Planning highlighted that RBGE had joined the Stonewall Diversity Champions Scheme (Trustees advised that some organisations were no longer in partnership with Stonewall and the RBGE’s involvement should be reviewed regularly), adopted the WelcoME system and app to facilitate visitors with access needs and released the Racial Justice Report which had attracted some press interest.  **ACTION:** The Director of Resources and Planning would arrange for a regular review of the Stonewall Diversity Champions Scheme. | **Director of Resources and Planning** |
| **15.0** | **Audit Committee Report** **of Meeting held Wednesday 16 February 2022**  The Chair of the Audit Committee presented a paper reporting on the meeting held on Thursday 16 June 2022 for the Board of Trustees’ information. |  |
| **15.0**  15.1  15.2 | **Science Advisory Committee**    Report of Meeting held Thursday 16 June 2022  The Chair of the Science Advisory Committee advised that following the introduction of new processes and the rotation of the Committee two new members (Des Thompson and Michelle Price) had joined. Discussions had focusses on the proposed restructure of Science and the new support posts for the Director of Science and Deputy Keeper.  Updated Terms of Reference  The Chair of the Science Advisory Committee presented updated Terms of Reference for the Board of Trustees to review and proposed that the Minutes of the Meetings be circulated to the Board of Trustees and the Executive Team but not put into the public domain and this was agreed.  **ACTION:** The Chair of the Science Advisory Committee and the Director of Science and Deputy Keeper would arrange for the Terms of Reference to be amended and issued. | **Chair Science Advisory Committee/**  **Director of Science and Deputy Keeper** |
| **16.0** | **Proposed Dates for 2023 Meetings**  The following dates were agreed for the 2023 meetings:   * Wednesday 29 March 2023 * Wednesday 28 June 2023 and Thursday 29 June 2023   (with a visit to Logan Botanic Garden and an overnight stay)   * Wednesday 27 September 2023 * Wednesday 13 December 2023 |
|  | **CLOSING ITEMS** |  |
| **17.0**  17.1 | **Any Other Business**  Fundraising  Fundraising was going well and there was some turnover in the Team which was usual in this sector. |  |
| **18.0** | **Arrangements for the Next Meeting**  The next meeting would be held on Wednesday 28 September 2022. |  |

**Jennifer Martin**

PA to the Regius Keeper

30 Jun3 2022

**Annex A** Summary of Actions

**ANNEX A**

**SUMMARY OF ACTIONS**

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| **NO** | **ITEMS** | **ACTION** | |
| **3.0** | **Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on Wednesday 2 March 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** | |
| **7.0** | **Project Gladiolus**  **ACTION:** The Regius Keeper and Director of Enterprise and Communication would amend the paper and the Chair would review it before a decision was made on presenting it to the Scottish Government. | **Regius Keeper/**  **Director of Enterprise and Communication** |
| **10.0** | **Key Results Dashboard – FY 2021/2022**  **ACTION:** The Director of Resources and Planning would amend the information in the charts to present the yearly comparison information in a clearer way. | **Director of Resources and Planning** |
| **11.0**  11.1 | **Finance**  Botanics Trading Company (BTC) – Letter of Support  **ACTION:** The Head of Finance, Corporate Governance and Risk would arrange for the Chair of sign the Botanics Trading Company Letter of Support. | **Head of Finance, Corporate Governance and Risk** |
| **14.0** | **Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)**  **ACTION:** The Director of Resources and Planning would arrange for a regular review of the Stonewall Diversity Champions Scheme. | **Director of Resources and Planning** |
| **15.0**  15.2 | **Science Advisory Committee**  Updated Terms of Reference  **ACTION:** The Chair of the Science Advisory Committee and the Director of Science and Deputy Keeper would arrange for the Terms of Reference to be amended and issued. | **Chair Science Advisory Committee/**  **Director of Science and Deputy Keeper** |