The British Museum Board of Trustees

Minutes of the meeting held on 28 and 29 September 2012 at the State Hermitage, St Petersburg

Present

Mr Niall FitzGerald KBE (Chairman)
Chief Emeka Anyaoku
Ms Karen Armstrong (for Part 2)
Professor Sir Christopher Bayly
Dame Liz Forgan
Sir George Iacobescu
Baroness Kennedy
Mr James Lupton
Mr John Micklethwait
Sir Paul Nurse
Mr Gavin Patterson
Sir Martin Sorrell (from Item 6)
Ms Ahdaf Soueif
Lord Stern
Lord Turner (for Part 2)

In Attendance

Neil MacGregor Director
Andrew Burnett Deputy Director
Joanna Mackle Director of Public Engagement
Justin Morris Director of Operations and Projects
Jonathan Williams Director of Collections
Christopher Yates Director of Administration
Mark Bates Governance and Planning Manager (Secretary)
Georgy Vilinbakhov Deputy Director of the State Hermitage Museum (Item 1.1)
Mikhail Piotrovski Director of the State Hermitage (Item 9.1)

Part 1: Friday 28 September, 14.30-16.30

1. Welcome

1.1 Georgy Vilinbakhov welcomed the Trustees to the State Hermitage, stressing the importance of the mutually beneficial relationship between the Hermitage and the British Museum. He also looked forward to the opening of the British Museum’s exhibition, Medals of Dishonour, at the Hermitage that evening.

1.2 The Chairman welcomed Sir Paul Nurse to the Board. His appointment had been approved by the Secretary of State on the nomination of the Royal Society for a term of four years from 28 September.

2. Apologies

2.1 Apologies had been received from Sir Ronald Cohen, Mr Francis Finlay, Professor Clive Gamble, Mr Antony Gormley, Ms Bonnie Greer, Ms Penny Hughes, Professor Amartya Sen and Baroness Wheatcroft.
3. Minutes of Meeting

3.1 The minutes of the Board meeting held on 5 July 2012 were approved and the Chairman was authorised to sign them as a true record.

3.2 Matters arising:

3.2.1 Item 2.2.1, Torres Strait human remains claim: representatives of the Torres Strait islanders would be meeting some of the Trustees on 8 October to present their case for the return of the two skulls. The Board would make a decision on the claim at the November Board meeting.

3.2.2 Item 2.2.2, Turkey: the Director informed the Board that the Turkish authorities were vigorously pursuing restitution claims with a number of museums across the world, including the British Museum. The embargo on loans from Turkish institutions would have no impact on the Museum’s current exhibition programme.

3.2.3 Item 2.2.7, DCMS Board Effectiveness Review: the Chairman and Director had commented on a draft of Charles Mackay’s report. DCMS was expected to publish the report in the autumn.

3.2.4 Item 2.2.9, Security: a new Security Strategy would be considered by the Standing Committee in October and by the Board in November.

3.2.5 Item 4.3, Reappointments: the Prime Minister had approved the reappointments of Karen Armstrong, Liz Forgan and Nick Stern for terms of four years from October.

3.2.6 Item 4.4, Research Committee: the inaugural committee meeting would be held on 17 October. The Chairman had invited Paul Nurse to join the committee.

3.2.7 Item 7.1, Visit to offsite stores: the Chairman encouraged all new Trustees to take up the opportunity to visit collections held at Blythe House or Orsman Road.

4. Declaration of Interests

4.1 No interests were declared.

5. Chairman’s report

5.1 The Chairman welcomed the re-establishment of the British Museum All-Party Parliamentary Group and stressed the importance of maintaining broad contact with the members.

5.2 The Chairman had visited the new Members’ Room and encouraged Trustees to do likewise.

6. Committee reports

6.1 The Chairman reported on Standing Committee and Nominations and Governance Committee business (see Annex).

6.2 Audit Committee business was discussed under Item 13.
7. **World Conservation and Exhibitions Centre**

7.1 Andrew Burnett provided an update on the WCEC project, reporting on its timetable and budget. He described how the below-ground building works were almost complete and that erection of the above-ground steel structure had commenced; mock-ups of the glass and stone façade had been viewed; and that the truck lift problem had been resolved satisfactorily. The Directorate was looking at the issues of the collection move and the tight timetable for the first exhibition.

7.2 A draft portfolio of WCEC fundraising proposals was tabled for further discussion at the next Board meeting.

8. **Management Report**

8.1 Jonathan Williams, Joanna Mackle, Justin Morris and Christopher Yates highlighted the key issues arising from the Management Report:

- An evaluation was underway of the collection moves from Orsman Road.
- The Keeper of Greece and Rome was leading a review of museum assistant resources.
- The decline in visits to the Museum during the Olympics period was in line with that seen by the majority of visitor attractions in central London.
- The new Head of Digital Media and Publishing had been appointed from November.
- The restructuring of staff within Operations was underway, which included the appointment of three new senior posts and a procurement exercise for facilities management.
- The Zayed National Museum project had made good progress.
- The Financial Sustainability Programme was on target at the end of Quarter 1.

8.2 The Director reported a favourable response to his recent speech to senior Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials.

8.3 Andrew Burnett provided an update on the implementation of the new hospitality contract.

**Part 2: Saturday 29 September 10.00-12.30**

9. **The State Hermitage**

9.1 Mikhail Piotrovski, Director of the State Hermitage welcomed the Board and provided an overview of the Hermitage’s strategy and programme.

9.2 The Chairman thanked Mr Piotrovski and his colleagues on behalf of the Board for their generous hospitality.

10. **Director’s report**

10.1 The Director outlined the key issues and challenges currently facing the Museum.

10.2 The Director informed the Board of a number of management changes.
11. Visitor research

11.1 Joanna Mackle gave a presentation on the Museum’s annual visitor research report findings.

12. Exhibition programme

12.1 Joanna Mackle presented the Museum’s proposed exhibition programme to 2016.

13. Audit Committee report

13.1 Christopher Yates drew the Trustees’ attention to some of the high residual risks and topical risks included in the Annual Audit Committee Report.

14. British Museum Friends Governance Review

14.1 The Board was content with the governance changes proposed for discussion at the British Museum Friends’ AGM in December.

15. Loans

15.1 The Board approved loans to Brading Roman Villa, Isle of Wight and the Réunion de Musées Nationaux, Musée de Cluny, Paris.

16. Quarter 1 Operating Plan report

16.1 Christopher Yates introduced the new format for quarterly Operating Plan reports. The Board noted the key issues and areas of concern.

17. Committee minutes

17.1 The Board noted the minutes of the Standing Committee meetings of 7 June and 19 July, the Audit Committee meeting of 22 March and the WCEC Committee meetings of 2 July and 30 July.

18. Any other business

18.1 The Chairman thanked Helena Kennedy for her outstanding contribution to the Board and the Nominations and Governance Committee.

19. In camera session

19.1 The management withdrew from the meeting for this item.

**Date of next Board meeting:** 22 November 2012, 15.00-17.30

_______________________________Chairman
ANNEX

Item 6: Committee reports

Standing Committee

The Standing Committee had met twice since the last Board meeting. The key issues considered were:

19 July 2012

- A new Standards of Conduct Policy and a Donations Policy to replace the Ethics Policy were discussed and approved, subject to some amendments. All staff would be expected to sign to say that they had read the Standards of Conduct Policy
- The terms of reference of the Research Committee were approved.

6 September 2012

- The Committee visited the WCEC site.
- The Quarter 1, 2012/13 Operating Plan report, Management Accounts and Investment report were presented and discussed.
- The Development Strategy was discussed and approved.

Nominations & Governance Committee

The Nominations & Governance Committee met on 24 July 2012. The key issues discussed were:

- The forthcoming recruitment exercise for two Prime Ministerial Trustee appointments.
- The recommendation to the Secretary of State for the Royal Society Trustee appointment.
- Trustee vacancies arising over the next year and the need to review the skills matrix at the November meeting.