The British Museum Board
Minutes of Meeting 19 November 2009
Held at the British Museum

Present

Mr Niall FitzGerald KBE (Chairman)
Professor Sir Christopher Bayly
Lord Broers
Sir Ronald Cohen
Mr Francis Finlay
Dame Liz Forgan
Miss Val Gooding
Mr Antony Gormley
Mr Stephen Green
Ms Bonnie Greer
Mrs Penny Hughes
Dr Olga Kennard
Baroness Kennedy
Mr Richard Lambert
Mr David Norgrove
Lord Powell (to Item 8)
Sir James Sassoon
Lord Stern (to Item 10)

In Attendance

Neil MacGregor  Director
Andrew Burnett  Deputy Director
Chris Yates  Director of Administration
Mark Bates  Governance and Policy Manager (Secretary)
Joanna Mackle  Director of Public Engagement (from Item 7)
Steve Gill  Director of Visitor and Building Services (from Item 10)

1. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Chief Emeka Anyaoku, Ms Karen Armstrong, Mr George Iacobescu and Mrs Edmé Leventis.

2. Minutes of Meeting 25 and 26 September 2009

2.1 The minutes of the Board meeting held on 25 and 26 September 2009 were approved and the Chairman was authorised to sign them as a true record.

2.2 Matters arising:

- Item 3.2: The first of a series of breakfast briefing sessions by Trustees for staff would be on 2 December with the Chairman and Lord Broers. A schedule of dates for future sessions would be circulated, and the Chairman urged all Trustees to participate.

  Action: Governance Manager
• Item 3.2: Andrew Dismore’s Holocaust (Return of Cultural Objects) Bill had received Royal Assent on 12 November. Mr Dismore had dropped his British Museum Act 1963 (Amendment) bill.

• Item 5.1: The first meeting of the International Strategy sub-committee would be on 10 December when it would consider the Zayed National Museum project and the Museum’s international strategy.

• Item 7.1: The Director reported that Martin Paisner had been very impressed by the Museum’s UK partnership work when he had attended the discussions with the Board and regional partners in Newcastle. The Dorset Foundation had since offered to fund the Head of National Programmes post at the Museum and to increase funding for the programme.

• Item 7.3: The Staffordshire Hoard was at the Museum for valuation, conservation and research. A display in Gallery 37 of a few items from the hoard had been opened by Margaret Hodge on 3 November.

• Item 8: The Director reported that John Curtis’ recent trip to Iran to discuss the loan of the Cyrus Cylinder had gone well. It was proposed to loan the Cylinder for an exhibition at the National Museum of Iran in Tehran for four months from January 2010. It was recommended not to require insurance because the Cylinder was irreplaceable, but the Museum would require undertakings on immunity from seizure from the executive and judiciary in Iran. It had been agreed that the British Museum would produce all written material about the Cylinder for the exhibition. The Board were content for the loan to proceed as proposed, subject to receiving the appropriate assurances on immunity from seizure.

• Item 19.1: The Chairman reminded the Board that Barry Cunliffe’s retirement dinner would be on 12 January.

3. Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

4. Chairman’s Report

4.1 The Chairman reported on the following changes to committee membership:

• Liz Forgan and Nick Stern had agreed to join the Standing Committee.
• Ronnie Cohen had asked to stand down from the Investment sub-committee, but had generously offered to provide advice from time to time as needed. Francis Finlay had agreed to become Chairman of the committee and James Sassoon had agreed to join it.
• Penny Hughes would join BM Friends Council to replace Barry Cunliffe.
• Nick Stern had agreed to join the Research Board.
• Nick Stern had stood down from the Audit Committee because of his new commitments.

4.2 The Chairman reported on his meeting with the Minister for Culture, Margaret Hodge, on 18 November. They had discussed the use of the Museum’s reserves for the World Conservation and Exhibitions Centre; the case for public funding of national museums; the Chairman’s proposals for tax relief on lifetime giving; and the
importance of the Portable Antiquities as exemplified by the Staffordshire Hoard find. The paper on tax reliefs would be circulated to Trustees.

*Action: Governance Manager*

5. **Reports from Permanent Committee Chairs**

5.1 The Chairman reported on the Standing Committee meeting of 29 October (see annex).

5.2 David Norgrove advised that the Audit Committee had not met since the last Board meeting.

5.3 Val Gooding reported on the Nominations & Governance Committee meeting held on 19 November (see annex). The Nominations and Governance Committee had considered Niall FitzGerald’s reappointment as a Trustee from March 2010 and recommended to the Board that he be reappointed for a term of four years. The Board approved the reappointment. Niall FitzGerald’s reappointment as Chairman from July 2010 would be considered in due course.

6. **Management Report**

6.1 The Board noted the contents of the Management Report.

6.2 The Director highlighted the success of the Day of the Dead celebrations held at the Museum on 1 November which had attracted an estimated 31,000 visitors. He also reported on a successful two-day workshop held in London in October to discuss the Zayed National Museum with key stakeholders.

7. **Advocacy Report**

7.1 The Board noted the contents of the Advocacy Report and Joanna Mackle highlighted:

- The success of the Trustees’ dinner.
- The British Museum All Party Parliamentary Group AGM to be held on 23 November.
- The signing of the Kids in Museums manifesto in January.
- Kofi Annan’s BP lecture on 22 February.

7.2 Joanna Mackle reported the outcome of the Advocacy Advisory Committee’s discussions on a government engagement strategy.

8. **A History of the World**

8.1 Joanna Mackle presented the *A History of the World* project, including clips from one of the radio broadcasts and from the CBBC TV programme, *Relic*. She also showed Trustees the branding and a sample page from the website.
9. **World Conservation & Exhibition Centre**

9.1 Liz Forgan provided a progress report and advised the Board that the revised planning application was provisionally scheduled for consideration by Camden’s planning committee on 17 December.

9.2 Chris Yates gave a presentation on funding.

9.3 Andrew Burnett reported on progress with the advocacy campaign.

10. **Space Plan and Visitor Experience**

10.1 The Director explained that the Museum’s Masterplan 2006 had been reviewed and a number of options for public space, office accommodation and storage had been identified. However, he explained that no decisions could be made until the WCEC planning decision following which, outline proposals would be submitted to the Board for further consideration.

10.2 Joanna Mackle gave a presentation on the Museum’s Visitor Experience Strategy which had been developed from the findings of the Visitor Experience project. In welcoming the strategy, Trustees highlighted the importance of developing technology capacity through partnerships; the need for effective management of culture change; and the importance of front line staff to successful implementation of the strategy.

11. **Loans**

11.1 The Board approved loans to the Zech Zollverein, Essen, Germany and the Istanbul Archaeological Museum, Turkey.

12. **Minutes of the Committees**

12.1 The Board noted the minutes of the Standing Committee meetings of 11 June and 10 September, and the WCEC Committee meeting of 30 September.

13. **Schedule of forthcoming events**

13.1 The Board noted the schedule of events.

14. **Any Other Business**

14.1 There was no other business.

__________________________________Chairman

Date of next meeting: Thursday 25 March 2010
Standing Committee Report by Niall FitzGerald

The key issues from the meeting held on 29 October 2009 were:

- World Conservation and Exhibition Centre – the impact of the recent announcement by the Prime Minister about DCMS funding for the project was considered. The Committee considered three possible programme options and agreed with the WCEC Committee’s recommendation of option 3.

- Zayed National Museum – the Head of the project reported on ZNM activity, in particular a successful two-day workshop in London for the key stakeholders.

- IS Strategy – the Committee approved the new strategy, subject to greater priority being given to revenue generating activity.

Nominations and Governance Committee Report by Val Gooding

The key issues from the meeting on 19 November 2009 were:

- The Committee recommended the reappointment of Niall FitzGerald as a Trustee from March 2010.

- A review of vacancies arising in the next year: it was agreed to consider a job specification for Lord Powell’s replacement at the meeting in March 2010.

- A review of skills needs to 2013: the Committee agreed the need for someone with e-technology skills and for representation by someone based outside of London and the South-East.

- Board performance assessment 2008 action plan: it was agreed that succession planning for the senior executive team should be considered at the next meeting.
• Board performance assessment 2009: it was agreed that the process would be same as the previous year and that the questionnaire should remain unchanged. Val Gooding would carry out an assessment of the Chairman’s performance, seeking input from the Trustees.