

Minutes

The British Museum Board

Meeting 6 October 2023

Held at Windmill Hill, Waddesdon Manor

Present

Mr George Osborne Chair
 Professor Abhijit Banerjee
 Professor Dame Mary Beard
 Dame Elizabeth Corley
 Ms Clarissa Farr
 Professor Chris Gosden
 Ms Muriel Gray
 Mr Philipp Hildebrand (Items 3.2-10)
 Dame Vivian Hunt
 Lord Jonathan Marland
 Sir Charlie Mayfield
 Mr Mark Pears
 Sir Paul Ruddock
 Mr Alejandro Santo Domingo
 Mr Weijian Shan
 Ms Priyanka Wadhawan
 Professor Sir Mark Walport
 Mr George Weston
 Professor Dame Sarah Worthington

In Attendance

Sir Mark Jones (Items 1-2, 3.1, 4, 5.2, 6-10)
 Director
 Christopher Yates (Items 1-2, 3.1, 4, 5.2, 6-10)
 Deputy Director
 Carl Heron (Items 1-2, 3.1, 4, 5.2, 6-10)
 Acting Deputy Director
 Kary Kelly (Items 1-2, 3.1, 4, 5.2, 6-10)
 Director of Advancement
 Jill Maggs (Items 1-2, 3.1, 4, 5.2, 6-10)
 Director of Public Engagement
 Russell Torrance (Items 1-2, 3.1, 4, 5.2, 6-10)
 Director of Estates and Capital Projects
 Lizzie Loudon (Items 1-2, 3.1, 4, 5.2, 6-10)
 Head of Communications
 Eoin Martin
 Governance Manager

 The Hon. Nigel Boardman (Item 3)
 Lucy D'Orsi CVO QPM (Item 3)
 Ian Karet (Item 3)

1. Apologies

- 1.1 Apologies had been received from Baroness Shafik.

2. Declaration of Interests

- 2.1 No interests were declared.

3. Update on the Independent Review

- 3.1 The Co-Chairs of the Independent Review provided an update on the progress of their work, including on the recovery of items found to have been lost, missing or stolen from the collection.
- 3.2 The Board held a discussion without the management team present.

4. Collection security update

- 4.1 Sir Mark Jones and Chris Yates provided an update on further measures implemented to improve the safety of the collection, while ensuring that the collection remains accessible, visible and used.
- 4.2 There was a discussion about completing the documentation of the collection. It was agreed that this should be a priority and that Sir Mark would bring to the Board in December a paper on how this could be done across a 5-year period and the implications this might have on other priorities. It was also agreed that it would be important, were the Trustees to approve any programme of documentation, for the Board to maintain regular oversight of progress on it.

Action: Sir Mark Jones

5. Updated whistleblowing policy

- 5.1 The Board held a discussion without the management team present.
- 5.2 The Board considered and approved updates to the Museum's whistleblowing policy and procedure. The Board also considered and approved a new procedure for the reporting of suspected theft from the collection.

6. Loan approvals

- 6.1 The Board approved loans to the Bowers Museum, Santa Ana, California, the Ho-Am Art Museum, Yongin, South Korea, and the Bishop Museum, Honolulu.

7. Chair's report

- 7.1 The Chair provided an update on preparations for his and the Director's appearance before the DCMS Select Committee on 15 October, on his recent engagement with DCMS and on progress on plans for the recruitment of a Director to succeed Sir Mark Jones on a permanent basis.

8. Management Report

- 8.1 The Board noted the report. There was a discussion about the benefits and the impact of retaining the option for visitors to the Museum to book a ticket for free entry.

9. Safeguarding Report

The Board noted an annual safeguarding report for the year 2022/23.

10. Announcements Forward Look

Kary Kelly, Lizzie Loudon and Jill Maggs gave a presentation to the Board on the Museum's forward look of activity. As part of this, the Board discussed the corporate sponsorship that it had agreed to accept when it met on 29 June.

There was a discussion of the increase of protest activity in museums, and it was noted with concern that collection items were now being targeted too. In this context it was agreed that the Museum's Executive would need to carefully consider the potential risks to security following high-profile announcements such as the Museum's acceptance of a new ten-year corporate partnership. Following this discussion, the Board reaffirmed its decision to accept the donation but requested a further discussion of the possible options for still more robust security arrangements and also associated communication options at – if necessary – a special meeting of the Board.

_____Chair

Date of next meeting: 27 November 2023