

## HORNIMAN PUBLIC MUSEUM AND PUBLIC PARK TRUST

Notes of the Board meeting of the Horniman Public Museum and Public Park Trust held on Wednesday 20 May 2020. *This meeting was held virtually via Zoom conferencing.*

### **Present**

Eve Salomon  
Caroline Cole  
Geoff Crossick  
Bunt Ghosh  
Simon Hesketh

Nico Iacuzzi  
Sarah Kemp  
Clare Matterson  
Carole Souter  
Helen Williams

Nick Merriman (Chief Executive)  
Paula Thomas (Board Secretary, Finance Director)  
Victoria Pinnington (Director, Communications and Income Generation)  
Tim Corum (Director, Curatorial and Public Engagement)  
Kirsten Walker (Director, Collections Care and Estates)

### **1. Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Mayowa Ochere.

### **2. Notes of last meeting**

The notes of the meeting on 23 April 2020 were agreed. All matters arising are covered elsewhere on the agenda.

### **3. Return of staff**

Kirsten summarised the main issues outlined in the paper circulated on the plans for staff return to working at the museum.

- The Gardens will return to normal opening times from Saturday 23 May with the Security team resuming their normal work patterns to support this. Estates are now on site more regularly and Collections Management staff are attending the SCC twice a week to check on the conditions there. Risk assessments are being developed for all of these areas.
- Individual work plans are being carried out for all staff to inform management of any issues e.g child care, health, public transport requirements.
- Once these have been collated and a risk assessment carried out a phased return of other staff can be put together and agreed in consultation with the union.
- Exhibitions and conservation staff are expected to start returning from 15 June in order to do some essential work on the collections and exhibitions.
- Front line staff are not expected to return until the end to July and will then have two weeks training ahead of a current planned opening date of 13 August.

There was a question as to what happens if there is a second spike in infections. The CEO commented that there was plenty of time before the planned opening date to amend the plans and delay the opening if necessary. In any case it depends on government advice and the rest of the sector.

There was some thought that the planned opening date was ambitious. There is a range of planned reopening times across the sector with small, rural museums keen to open as soon as possible, university museums not opening until the start of the new academic year in September and large nationals anticipating opening sometime in August.

In terms of getting staff and the museum ready, quite a lot of work has already been done on thinking about work spaces, eating areas etc. There are some pinch points which may necessitate staff working in shifts.

Trustees agreed that the plan seemed sensible.

#### **4. Reopening of Museum**

Victoria presented a summary of the main issues highlighted in the overview sheet on reopening to the public which had been circulated.

A re-mobilisation team was working on detailed plans for specific areas eg cleaning, toilets, café front of house.

The first wave of ALVA research had suggested that the market was very cautious and therefore it was critical to get it right from the start. It was important that hygiene and cleaning were seen to be at the forefront. The public trust the attractions to look after them but don't trust other members of the public. Staff will therefore need to be trained to ensure social distancing.

It was noted that having a largely local audience who are already visiting the gardens would act in our favour but it would be essential to ensure social distancing across the estate. Management are currently working out capacity based on either a per square footage basis or 30% of peak average footfall. Timed tickets are being considered but it is thought that this might not suit our audience and that a queuing system would be more suitable.

Other areas being considered are:

- The need for a separate exit as the entrance is too narrow to permit both
- Opening all areas except the Aquarium which is considered too difficult
- Perspex screens across the ticket/information desk.
- Hand sanitisers everywhere
- Public facing staff wearing masks
- Toilets – these are a challenge and the café ones will need to be closed.

Trustees commented that social distancing was likely to be difficult given our young audience and questioned whether more could be brought outside. Management reported that more outside activities are being considered but there is a balance to be struck as we do want people to visit the museum and spend money.

It was suggested that visitors/ members be surveyed about their attitudes and expectations before the museum reopened. The 'r' rate is different across the country and lowest in London so the local picture needs to be considered.

There was a question as to whether there would be health and safety issue if some of the toilets were closed down. Management reported that the Estates Manager is looking into this and that we are also considering refurbishing some old toilets for use by staff.

Trustees questioned why no school visits were being planned before 2021.

Management responded that soundings had been taken and that there wasn't much appetite from schools before 2021. In addition the museum has no capacity to manage social distancing for school visits.

It was noted that there were several pinch points around the galleries and that work is being done to establish capacity and develop a flow around as far as possible.

## **5. Financial Projections**

The CEO presented the financial projections which had been updated since the early ones when the extent of the pandemic and its impact were unknown.

Now that the decisions regarding furloughing staff had been made, management had started to look at the impact on the business this year and the next two years.

The projections currently show deficits for the following two years, but all of these are based on a number of assumptions which have to be tested. The plan would be to reopen and see what the actual position is and then remodel based on reality. The revised projections and plans will be brought to the Board in October.

It is likely that some reserves will need to be used in 2021/22 but the plan will be to move to a more sustainable model for the future. This will mostly be achieved through staff redundancies. This will be costly in the short term but without additional government support would be essential for the long term sustainability of the organization.

Trustees noted that it was very difficult to make predictions given the difficulty of knowing what future audiences will look like and how they will spend.

Trustees asked about fundraising. Management reported that an appeal to donors is planned. The Great Walrus Teaparty has just been launched online with Jo Brand fronting it. It was agreed that trustees would be sent information about any fundraising initiatives.

HME Board had agreed that Plonk Golf should open before the Museum and other self-generating activities in the gardens are being considered, however the main income-generating events previously planned (Summer Festival and Rave) have been cancelled as they don't lend themselves to social distancing.

Trustees questioned whether there were any spend-to-save initiatives which could be funded, or for which loans could be sought. Management agreed that this could be considered for the Kinder Café etc once the funding landscape was clearer but we would need to ensure that sufficient income would be generated to make any loans viable.

Trustees agreed that the use of reserves to cover the current year deficit was appropriate and that the business planning should proceed on the basis set out.

## **6. Café update**

Victoria provided an update on the latest position regarding the café. An operational meeting has been set up to start talking about plans to reopen the café with a reduced offer, but with additional presence in the Gardens. We need to concentrate on getting the café up and running in a safe way and generating income again. The CEO reported that the HME Board had looked at last year's waiver of rent again and the current issues. A timeline of the decision making and circumstances had been put together and circulated to the HME Board and all trustees prior to the meeting. This includes lessons learnt and the longer term issues re Anthony as sole

proprietor and the need to keep the financial position under review. A strategic review is planned for the autumn.

The Chair commented that the report was reassuring. The Board confirmed that after reviewing the paper they understood management's decision and appreciated the steps taken subsequently.

## **7. SMT updates**

### *Communications and Income Generation (Victoria)*

Nothing to add – all staff are Ok, including those on furlough.

### *Curatorial and Public Engagement (Tim)*

Work is being done with Nick and the team on handovers. This is also being done with relevant partners.

Staff are ok and things have quietened down now that some of them are on furlough.

Some staff are doing innovative work and some good ideas are being developed.

The Schools team have put some material online.

### *Collections Management and Estates (Kirsten) and Finance (Paula)*

Nothing to add.

## **CEO**

The first all-staff zoom meeting is being held tomorrow morning.

The Art Fund have agreed to provide some support for a Touring Exhibitions model.

They will fund an initial exploratory pilot for Hair. The level of funding is as yet unknown.

## **8. AOB**

The Chair expressed thanks on behalf of the Board to Tim for all his work over the last five years and wished him well for the future.

There was no other business.