

# museum

National Museum of Ireland

Ard-Mhúsaem na hÉireann

## Board of the National Museum of Ireland

Minutes of Meeting of the Board

on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> September 2020 via video-conference

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<b>Present:</b>	Ms Catherine Heaney (Chair) Ms Helen Shenton Professor Ingrid Hook Professor Kathleen James-Chakraborty Dr Linda King Mr Paolo Viscardi	Ms Denise Moroney Mr Declan Nelson Professor Mary O'Dowd Dr Andrew Power Mr John Bowen Ms Judith McCarthy Mr Ambrose Loughlin Ms Mary Crotty
<b>Apologies:</b>	None	
<b>In attendance:</b>	Ms Lynn Scarff (Director, NMI) Dr Audrey Whitty (Head of Collections & Learning) Ms Aoife Hurley (Head of Operations)	Ms Maria Kearns (Head of HR, NMI) Mr Mark Sherry (Head of Finance & Procurement) Ms Jade Dillon (Secretary to the Board, NMI)

### 1. Opening of the meeting, apologies if any, adoption of the agenda

The Chair opened the meeting and thanked the Board members for joining the meeting via video conference. Deepest sympathies and condolences were offered to Ms Valerie Dowling's family. Valerie was NMI's Senior Photographer and longest serving member of staff, she sadly passed away after a bravely fought illness. The Board expressed their condolences to Valerie's family and the NMI staff, particularly those from the Kildare Street site.

No apologies were conveyed, however it was noted that Prof Kathleen James-Chakraborty would be joining the meeting at a later time, and that Ms Shenton would need to leave the meeting early. It was noted that the Board meeting may be adjourned earlier than usual due to the absence of a meeting break.

The Board noted the agenda and approved the items for discussion.

### 2. Minutes of the meeting of 25<sup>th</sup> June and 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2020 and matters arising

The Board minutes of 25<sup>th</sup> June and 23<sup>rd</sup> July were approved with exception to the inclusion of an amendment under the Audit & Risk Report in the Board minutes from the 25<sup>th</sup> June 2020.

**The Secretary agreed to include the amendment in the approved Board minutes of 25<sup>th</sup> June 2020.**

## **2a. Matters Arising**

### *a) Terms of reference for C&E*

The Director informed the Board that she is currently liaising with the Chair of Audit & Risk Committee and the Chair of the Capital & Estates Committee on refining the wording within the Terms of Reference for the Capital & Estates Committee.

### *b) Director's Mid-Year review*

The Chair confirmed that the Director's mid-year review was completed.

## **3. Executive Report from the Chair & the Director**

a) The Board noted the Executive Report, The Director gave the Board a brief overview of the key items within the Executive Report, including;

- Results to an audience research survey.
- The launch of *Glendalough: Power, Prayer & Pilgrimage* exhibition.
- Social media coverage report for the recently launched *Glendalough: Power, Prayer & Pilgrimage* exhibition.
- NMI Media Report.
- A draft publication from NMI – Natural History.
- Updates on sanctions, capital projects and recently approved exhibitions.
- Annex to Code of Practice for Governance of Public Bodies: Gender Balance, Diversity, and Inclusion.
- Overview of learning and development at NMI.

The Board congratulated NMI staff on their social media presence, particularly in relation to the decant of NMI – Natural History.

Dr King commended NMI staff on their pro-activity during the closure of NMI, including the establishment of key community engagement-related Working Groups such as the Web-Editorial Group, the Collections Provenance Working Group and the Community Engagement Strategy Group.

### *b) Memorandum of Understanding with National Museum of Northern Ireland*

The Director informed the Board that NMI and NMNI are currently in the process of drafting an MoU and that it is intended that the final document will be launched in February 2021.

### *c) Glendalough: Power, Prayer & Pilgrimage*

The Director gave an overview of the launch of *Glendalough: Power, Prayer & Pilgrimage* exhibition which took place on the 16<sup>th</sup> September 2020. The exhibition was launched by the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, Catherine Martin, T.D, and the Minister of State for Heritage and Electoral Reform, Malcolm Noonan, Archbishop Diarmuid Martin and the Chair of the Board also spoke at the event.

The Director informed the Board that both Minister Martin and Minister Noonan separately requested private tours of the exhibition prior to the launch and that both stayed for a long period of time and showed genuine interest in the exhibition and the Collection of NMI – Archaeology.

The Director expressed her regret that members of the NMI Board, other VIPs and the general public could not attend the event in person, due to Covid-19 restrictions. Board members commended the ICT team on live-streaming the launch.

*d) Meetings with the Council of National Cultural Institutions (CNCI)*

The Director updated the Board on recent meetings with Ireland's Cultural Institutions and informed the Board that the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media attended the most recent meeting.

*e) Public Duty and the importance of our museums*

The Chair thanked the Director for her updates and stressed the importance of the cultural institutions during the Covid-19 pandemic; particularly in relation to its public duty. The Chair informed the Board that she had visited the three of NMI's Dublin sites and NMI – Country Life during the summer and noted the decrease of visitors.

The Chair firmly posited that compared to other public areas, museums are one of the safest areas that the public can visit, and for the following reasons;

- Visits are timed.
- NMI has invested a significant amount of time into Covid-19 safety training.
- NMI has heavily invested in wayfinding Covid-19 signage, sanitisation points, automatic doors.
- Generous exhibition spaces.
- A place for contemplation and solace.

The Board discussed the relevance of the National Museum of Ireland, particularly during a time when smaller culture spaces are not in a position to open.

The Chair stressed the role of the Board in advocating for the NMI during this time of uncertainty and thanked the Board for their commitment to the NMI during this obligatory closure.

#### **4. Special Discussion Topic: Board Recruitment Strategy & Handover process**

a) The Chair and the Director thanked the Board for completing the Board Recruitment and Handover survey that was circulated by the Secretary. The Chair informed the Board that she has liaised with the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media on a number of occasions in recent months regarding the recruitment of new Board members to NMI. The Chair reported that the Department is very receptive of a revised Board recruitment strategy. The Chair also reported that Minister Martin is also very interested in growing diversity on a wider basis.

*b) Presentation*

The Chair presented the results of the Board Recruitment and Handover survey, which included the question on whether or not individual Board members would be seeking re-appointment, if their terms were coming to an end mid next year. The Chair highlighted that two new Board members will be appointed by the end of the year.

c) The Chair listed out the areas of expertise that the Board would be losing upon the departure of current Board members who would not be seeking re-appointment and mentioned that the gender balance on the future Board is important. .

The Board noted the proposed timeline for the Recruitment/Handover Strategy as follows:

1. Board agreement on required areas of expertise/ background and diversity of new Board recruits.

2. Updated criteria to be submitted to Department of TCAGS&M and Minister Martin for approval.
3. New and updated candidate handbook developed with Department feedback.
4. Board involvement: reach-out via social media, advocate, Board member videos.
5. Outgoing Board members to communicate with incoming Board members.

d) It was agreed that the updated criteria would be submitted to Minister Martin for her approval, along with a letter explaining the Board's strategy. **The Secretary agreed to draft the letter for the Chair's review prior to sending to the Minister.**

**It was agreed that the Candidate Handbook would feature as an agenda item at the next Board meeting.**

#### **4a) Strategy & Engagement**

The Board noted the Strategy & Engagement Committee Report. Dr King updated the Board on key areas. Dr King informed the Board that the Head of Marketing, Ms Ann Daly had presented to the Committee. Dr King told the Board that the next Committee meeting would be taking place next week and that NMI's Head of Digital & Information Systems, Mr Derek Williams will be presenting. Dr King conveyed her support for the marketing and education departments and that the presentations have been beneficial to the Committee in engaging the members on how best they can support the Executive.

#### **4b) GPAC**

The Board noted the GPAC Report. Prof Kathleen James-Chakraborty updated the Board on key areas.

##### *a) Appointment of an Ethnographer at NMI*

On behalf of GPAC, Prof James-Chakraborty strongly advocated for the appointment of an Ethnographer at NMI and stressed the importance of appointing an expert for the formulation of NMI's Provenance Strategy, if NMI is to be considered on a par with other international museums that house ethnographic collections.

**The Board agreed that the appointment of an Ethnographer at NMI is important for NMI's Collection and for the formulation of NMI's Provenance Strategy.**

##### *b) MSPI*

The Board noted the Collections & Learning MSPI policy and procedures progress report. The Board were informed that there is only one outstanding Collections & Learning related policy yet to be approved by the Board i.e. Irish Folklife Division policy. Dr Whitty informed the Board that the Keeper of Irish Folklife Division, Ms Clodagh Doyle is currently finalising the draft for circulation to GPAC.

##### *c) Inventory Project*

Prof James-Chakraborty informed the Committee that the Inventory Project re-commenced at the end of September and has been scheduled across different collections through to next year. The Director stated that the delays in the start date of the project was due to operational challenges as a result of the pandemic, and NMI's capital projects.

#### **4c) Audit & Risk Committee**

Mr Loughlin gave the Board a verbal report on the Audit & Risk Committee and it was agreed that the written report would be drawn up and circulated after the meeting.

*a) Comptroller and Auditor General*

Mr Loughlin informed the Board that Comptroller and Auditor General attended the Committee meeting that took place on 22<sup>nd</sup> September. Mr Loughlin informed the Board that some minor issues were raised by the auditor but that the auditor was satisfied overall with the results of the audit. Mr Loughlin informed the Board that the report and the Financial Statements will be sent to the Deputy Director within C&AG for review next week.

**The Board gave leave to the Chair of the Board and the Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee to sign off on the Financial Statements upon the approval of the C&AG.**

*b) Audit & Risk Committee Charter*

The Audit & Risk Committee Charter was revised by the Committee to enable the NMI Board's subcommittees to engage with ARC on any issues relating to finance and risk matters; particularly in relation to capital projects or infrastructural projects. The Committee agreed that a full review of the Charter is warranted and that this would be discussed at a future Committee meeting.

*c) NMI Recruitment Policy*

Mr Loughlin informed the Board that NMI's Recruitment Policy, was approved by the Committee with the exception of some amendments. The Committee agreed that the amended version should be circulated to the Board for its next meeting.

*d) NMI Retail and Own Resource Income*

Mr Loughlin reported that NMI's own resource income (accrued via donations, car parks, commercial events and retail) has been decimated as a result of a drop in footfall due to COVID-19. The Director informed the Board that a Retail Taskforce has been established to develop a strategy.

**4d) Capital & Estates Committee**

The Board noted the Capital & Estates Committee Report. Mr Bowen gave the Board an overview of the key areas discussed at the last meeting.

*a) Controls & Oversight of Capital Projects*

Mr Bowen informed the Board that he had liaised with the Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee and the Director on the interface between Capital & Estates Committee and the Audit & Risk Committee. Mr Bowen stressed the importance of having a clear structure in place in order to ensure that the appropriate controls and oversight are established for NMI's capital and infrastructural projects.

*b) NMI's Head of Digital & Information Systems*

Mr Derek Williams, Head of Digital & Information Systems gave the Committee a presentation on his team's current priorities. Mr Williams is currently concentrating on infrastructural projects (Phase 1), followed by the establishment of an overarching Digital Strategy for NMI (Phase 2).

*c) Recruitment of External Members*

Mr Bowen informed the Board that the Committee members discussed the appointment of external members onto the Committee and the skills that could be advantageous to the Committee and the Executive coming into a busy year of capital projects for NMI.

The Chair thanked the Chairs of the subcommittees for their reports.

**5. A.O.B**

None.

**6. Date of next meeting**

Supplementary Meeting: 22<sup>nd</sup> October, 10am-11am.

Full Meeting: 19<sup>th</sup> November, 10am-1pm.

End of meeting.

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