

Board of the National Museum of Ireland

Minutes of Meeting of the Board on Thursday 23rd January 2020,
CRC Board Room, National Museum of Ireland – Collections Resource Centre

Present:	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 Ms Judith McCarthy Mr Ambrose Loughlin
Apologies:	Ms Mary Crotty Mr John Bowen	
In attendance:	Ms Lynn Scarff (Director, NMI) M Aoife Hurley (Head of Operations) Ms Jade Dillon (Secretary to Board, NMI)	Ms Maria Kearns (Head of HR, NMI) (Item 6c only)

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

The Chair opened the meeting and gave apologies for Mr Bowen and Ms Crotty. The Chair requested a moment of silence for Mr Bowen’s wife, Ms Teresa Bowen who recently passed away.

The Chair welcomed Ms Aoife Hurley, NMI’s new Head of Operations and informed the Board that Ms Hurley would be giving the Board a report for the Development & Strategy Committee in Mr Bowen’s absence.

The Agenda was proposed by Prof James-Chakraborty and seconded by Dr Power.

2. Minutes of the meeting of 21st November 2019 and matters arising

The minutes of 21st November 2019 were approved subject to minor amendments.

3. Executive Report by the Chair and the Director

The Chair gave an overview of recent decisions made by Board members in relation to Board and Committee Strategies for 2020. The Chair informed the Board that the Minister of the Department of Culture, Heritage & the Gaeltacht (DCHG) was formally notified of the



cessation of NMI's HR Committee on the 13th January 2020. The letter to the Minister noted that the HR Committee was successful in fulfilling its duties and meeting its goals as a Committee and that HR matters would be reported to the Audit and Risk Committee as and when necessary. The Board commended NMI's Head of Human Resource, Ms Maria Kearns, for her work on improving NMI's HR-related processes.

The Chair requested that the final version of the letter to the Minister, be circulated prior to the next Board meeting for the record.

The Director gave the Board key updates on NMI's recent activity. The Board noted the Executive Report.

World Café Day

The Director informed the Board that NMI's World Café Day is due to take place in April 2020, dependent on staff availability.

Network Upgrade

The Director updated the Board on NMI's current I.T projects. The Director informed that Board that NMI's recently appointed Head of Digital and Information Systems, Mr Derek Williams will be taking the lead in resolving NMI's network issues.

Collections Resource Centre (CRC)

The Director informed the Board that Secretary General, Ms Katherine Licken and Assistant Secretary General, Mr Conor Falvey planned to visit the Collections Resource Centre on the 12th February 2020.

The Moon Car

The Director reported on one of NMI's recent acquisitions, acquired by the museum. The Director informed the Board that the Moon Car was donated by Mr Pat McSweeney on the 9th January 2020. The vehicle in question is a restored 1919 Rolls Royce 'Silver Ghost' luxury sedan and is associated with the IRA Attack on Cobh on 21 March 1924.

Secrets of Skin

Discussions followed on BBC's series at Christmas, *Secrets of Skin* that was filmed at NMI – Natural History. Prof Hook complimented Mr Viscardi on his expertise shared on the series.

Mr Viscardi agreed to send a link to Board members for their viewing.

Some discussions followed on NMI's outreach via mailing lists. The Director informed the Board that marketing and email lists with NMI will soon be managed via NMI's new website.

Footfall

The Director reported that there has been an 11% increase in footfall overall for 2019 i.e. total figure for all four sites was 1,250,767.

Irish Wars – re-opening of the gallery at NMI – Decorative Arts & History

The Board discussed the launch of the re-opening of the *Irish Wars* gallery that took place on the 21st January 2020. The exhibition was launched by Dr Maurice Manning, Chair of the Expert Advisory Group on Centenary Commemorations and was very well attended. It was noted that the Curator and historian, Ms Brenda Malone had taken the Board's recommendations on exhibition content into consideration. The Board acknowledged the scale of work involved in the re-development of the gallery space and congratulations were conveyed to those involved.

Culture 2025

The Chair reported on the Department of Culture, Heritage & the Gaeltacht's launch of their *Culture 2025* policy. The Chair proposed that the document would prove to be valuable for NMI and should be reviewed in the context of NMI's *Master Vision*.

The Secretary agreed to circulate the *Culture 2025* document to Board members in PDF (hard copies provided if requested).

Faílte Ireland Award

The Director reported that NMI – Country Life had achieved a Customer Service Excellence Award through Fáilte Ireland. The Director posited that the award demonstrates the pro-active nature of the Turlough Park team and that it was well deserved. The Board warmly congratulated the team for their efforts.

The Secretary agreed to communicate this to the VSOs.

The Chair informed the Board that NMI's two State Board vacancies are currently live on the State Boards website and that the deadline for submissions is the 3rd February 2020 at 3pm.

It was agreed that a solid handover plan should be finalised that can then be shared with incoming Board members.

4. Committee Strategies

Having previously consulted with the Chairs of NMI's standing committees, the Chair gave the Board an overview of the proposed strategies of the Board for 2020, and for the next 17 months of the current Board's term. The Board noted the relevant documents previously circulated by the Secretary.

The Chair requested that the Board communicate their preferences for standing committee seats for 2020.

It was agreed that all preferences should be forwarded to the Secretary before the end of the month.

It was agreed that feedback on Committee priorities should be forwarded prior to Committee meetings.



Cessation of NMI Non-Statutory Standing Committees

It was formally agreed by the Board that the cessation of the HR Committee was warranted due to the Committee's success in achieving its goals.

It was formally agreed by the Board that NMI strategies implemented by NMI and overseen by the Strategy Committee are now functioning at an operational level and do not require further supervision on a Board sub-committee level.

The role of the Board members in terms of providing direction/mentorship to the NMI Executive was discussed. The Chair advised that the priorities of each committee should be summarised and appended to the Board's Standing Order 2020.

The Board's Standing Order 2020 was noted by the Board and was formally approved.

The Standing Order appendix (i.e. committee priorities) was approved subject to minor amendments. **The Director agreed to amend accordingly.**

Capital & Estates Committee

The Chair notified the Board that, having communicated with fellow standing committee members, the Chairs of the Standing Committees had convened in December and had agreed that a new non-statutory Standing Committee should be established. It was agreed that the Committee should focus solely on NMI's building projects; as per NMI's *Strategic Plan 2019-2022*. The Chair informed the Board that Mr Bowen had volunteered to chair this new Committee and the Board agreed that Mr Bowen would be suitable for this role.

Development & Strategy Committee

The Chair further reported that the focus of the Development & Strategy Committee should be shifted towards NMI's branding and identity. The Chair informed the Board that Dr King had volunteered to Chair the Development & Strategy Committee and the Board approved the appointment.

6a Development & Strategy Committee Update

The Director updated the Board on Development & Strategy Committee and introduced Ms Hurley who gave a PowerPoint presentation in Mr Bowen's absence. **It was agreed that the presentation would be circulated to Board members after the meeting.**

Ms Hurley gave an overview on NMI's five key sites in relation to NMI's capital works programme.

NMI - Natural History

Ms Hurley informed the Board that the redevelopment of NMI – Natural History is currently in its Business Plan phase and that an Ad hoc working group has been established between NMI, the Office of Public Works (OPW) and the Department of Culture, Heritage & the Gaeltacht.

Ceramics Room

Ms Hurley gave an update on the Ceramics Room and informed the Board that the removal of furniture has commenced today.

NMI - Collections Resource Centre

Ms Hurley informed the Board that a meeting took place between NMI and OPW. Ms Hurley reported that a strategic assessment document is currently being drafted for the CRC project in keeping with requirements of the Public Spending Code.

Some discussions followed on NMI's storage solutions, NMI's decanting strategies and decanting-related resources.

NMI – Country Life

Ms Hurley reported that she and Ms Frances Toner, Marketing Executive are currently working towards securing funding for improving upon NMI – Country Life's visitor spaces.

The Chair thanked Ms Hurley for her comprehensive overview of NMI's capital projects.

6b) General Public Advisory Committee (GPAC) update

MSPI

Prof James-Chakraborty informed the Board that GPAC had signed off on the following NMI Collection policies and strategies at their last meeting on the 6th December 2019:

Exhibitions Policy, Loans Policy, Label Policy, Research Policy and Publication Policy.

Prof James-Chakraborty recommended the adoption of the above-mentioned policies and the Board formally approved the five policies.

The Director informed the Board that she and the Head of Collections and Learning would be attending the launch of the *Eileen Gray* exhibition at the Bard Graduate Centre, New York on the 29th February 2020.

6c. Audit & Risk Committee Report

Mr Loughlin gave an update on the Audit and Risk Committee and NMI's finances.

Mr Loughlin informed the Board that a document outlining the Audit & Risk Committee's priorities for 2020 would be circulated to the Board by the Secretary after the meeting.

Mr Loughlin informed the Board that NMI's Head of Human Resources, Ms Maria Kearns, would be reporting to the Audit & Risk Committee on a quarterly basis.

Ms Kearns joined the meeting and gave the Board a brief overview on NMI's legal cases.



The Board discussed the Oversight Agreement from the Department of Culture, Heritage & the Gaeltacht (DCHG) and agreed, pending clarity on one point, that it would be signed on behalf of the Board and returned to the DCHG.

7. Closed session: Director's Review

The NMI Executive and the Secretary left the meeting room for the closed session.

Notes from Chair of the Board

The Board discussed the areas of the review that had been agreed for prioritisation in the Director's goal setting for 2020. The Board advised on additional areas for consideration. The Board gave leave to the Chair and Dr King to sign off on the review, pending the Director's completion of all paperwork.

End of meeting.