

Board of the National Museum of Ireland

Minutes of Meeting of the Board

on Thursday 10th June 2021 via video-conference

Present:	Ms Catherine Heaney (Chair) Ms Helen Shenton Professor Ingrid Hook Professor Kathleen James-Chakraborty Dr Linda King Mr Paolo Viscardi Dr Susan Rogers Dr Barra O'Donnabhain	Ms Denise Moroney Mr Declan Nelson Professor Mary O'Dowd Dr Andrew Power Mr John Bowen Ms Helen Shenton Mr Ambrose Loughlin Ms Judith McCarthy Ms Mary Crotty
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Apologies: None.

In attendance: Ms Lynn Scarff (Director, NMI)
Dr Audrey Whitty (Head of Collections & Learning, NMI)
Ms Jade Dillon (Secretary to the Board, NMI)

1.0 Opening of meeting, apologies if any and matters arising.

The Chair opened the meeting. No apologies were conveyed however Ms Shenton and Dr Power informed the Board that they would need to leave the meeting early. The agenda was adopted.

2.0 Minutes of previous minutes of 29th April 2021.

The minutes of 29th April were proposed by Prof James-Chakraborty and seconded by Mr Bowen, with exception to a minor correction.

3.0 Executive report.

The Board noted the Executive report and the Director elaborated on key updates, including:

a) Board appointments and continuity.

The Chair updated the Board on Board recruitment and Board re-appointments. The Chair informed the Board that the Board recruitment booklet is currently being processed by the Public Appointments Service. The Chair notified the Board that she had accepted the invitation to be re-appointed as Chair for a further two-year term. Mr Bowen and Mr Loughlin have been re-appointed for a further five-year term and Dr Andrew Power and Mr Nelson have been re-appointed for a further two-year term. On behalf of the executive, the Director expressed her sincere appreciation to the members who had expressed their willingness to be re-appointed for additional terms and highlighted the value of continuity.

b) Sanction.

The Head of Human Resources role has been offered, and is awaiting contract signing.

c) Natural History decant.

A draft preliminary business case for the Natural History capital project was submitted to the Department of



Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media (DTCAGSM) on 2nd June for review. A meeting with the DTCAGSM will be scheduled over the next few weeks as soon as the initial review of the documents has taken place.

d) Storage capacity.

The Director reported that curatorial, conservation and registration teams are under increasing pressure to make spaces suitable for the storage of collections from the Natural History and Irish Antiquities Divisions decants that are necessary in order for capital works to take place. A planned block of work in the Collections Resource Centre to shelve archaeological material from various companies in order to free up essential space and to ensure material is properly accommodated has commenced with limited staff (owing to Covid-19 and other commitments). The Director highlighted that this had a knock-on effect on the business plans within the Irish Antiquities Division, Registration and other departments as a result of the time commitment required for essential storage works and decants.

e) Inform exhibition media launch.

The Director updated the Board on the media launch for the *InForm* exhibition that took place on 24th May. The exhibition was officially launched by the Minister for the DTCAGSM, Catherine Martin.

The Chair noted Minister Martin's genuine interest and commitment to the NMI and it was agreed that a letter of invitation would be extended to Minister Martin upon the formation of the new NMI Board later this year.

f) 20th Century History of Ireland Galleries Expert Advisory Group.

The Director informed the Board that Prof O'Dowd and Dr King have accepted invitations to become members of the *20th Century History of Ireland Galleries Expert Advisory Group*.

It was agreed that Dr Whitty would circulate a list of confirmed members after the meeting.

The executive report was approved by the Board.

4.0 Risk.

The Board noted the presentation summary on risk and NMI's risk register. The Director thanked Mr Loughlin for his input for the presentation and gave an overview of the key risk areas discussed by the Audit & Risk Committee at its last meeting, including:

- Financial implications to NMI's capital projects due to delays caused by Covid-19.
- Staffing required to fulfill capital projects is delayed due to the inability of the NMI to contract staff directly against capital.
- Commercial downturn due to Covid-19.

4.1 Feedback.

Mr Loughlin emphasised to the Board that risk and risk monitoring should not reside solely within the Audit and Risk Committee and should be a main agenda item for the other Board Committee meetings.

It was agreed that risk would feature on Committee agendas going forward.

The Chair put forward that a good risk strategy should be backed up by an effective communications strategy and supported the Strategy & Engagement Committee in overseeing this for the NMI.

4.2 Cyber security presentation, by Mr Derek Williams, Head of Digital & Information Systems.

On behalf of the Board, the Chair welcomed Mr Williams to the meeting. Mr Loughlin informed the Board that Mr Williams had presented the same presentation to the Audit & Risk Committee last week. Mr Williams thanked the Board for their invitation and provided an overview of the NMI's current cyber security systems

and processes.

4.3 Feedback.

On behalf of the Board, the Chair thanked Mr Williams for his presentation. Some discussions followed on the need for additional staffing in the area of I.T to help in the rollout of essential infrastructural projects. Mr Loughlin informed the Board that this was also discussed at the last Audit & Risk Committee following Mr Williams' presentation.

It was agreed that the need for staffing against capital programmes would be raised in the official Board handover letter to the DTCAGSM.

Dr Power and Mr Williams left the meeting.

5.0 Committee reports.

5.1 Audit & Risk Committee.

The Board noted the report. Mr Loughlin gave an overview of the NMI's financial report.

a) Data protection policy.

The Board noted the Data Protection policy, which was approved by the Audit & Risk Committee subject to minor amendments.

The NMI's data protection policy was formally approved by the Board.

b) Re-appointment of external Board member.

Mr Loughlin informed the Board that the term of an external member, Mr Michael O Sullivan (former vice president of UCC) ends on 18th June 2021. Mr Loughlin put forward that Mr O'Sullivan has been a valuable member of the Committee and that he is willing to continue on the Audit & Risk Committee for another three-year term, subject to the approval of the Board.

The Board formally approved the re-appointment of external Board member, Mr O'Sullivan and a note of thanks to Mr O'Sullivan was recorded by the Secretary.

c) External audit for 2020.

Mr Loughlin informed the Board that the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) are aware that the term of the current Board will end on 5th July (last meeting 29th June) and that the sign off of financial statements would ideally need to be completed before this time. Mr Loughlin reported that the audit process so far has been positive and well engaged.

d) Financial report (January to April).

Mr Loughlin notified the Board that budget processing is progressing reasonably well and that most costs will be coming in on budget. Mr Loughlin reported that, apart from own resources and retail continuing to be a cause for concern due to Covid-19, there was no particular note to bring to the attention of the Board.

e) Procurement.

Mr Loughlin reported that procurement training and implementation of improved processes is progressing satisfactorily.

f) Stripe.

Mr Loughlin advised that NMI will be introducing *Stripe* as a facility for online donations including tap machines at site entrances. Mr Loughlin reported that NMI will be circulating an online donations policy to



the Audit & Risk Committee in due course.

g) Final draft of financial statements for 2020.

Mr Loughlin informed the Board that the Audit & Risk Committee had reviewed the final draft of the 2020 financial statements and approved the draft with exception to minor amendments.

It was agreed that the final version would be brought to the attention of the Board on 29th June.

The Committee formally adopted the financial pack for circulation to the Board.

i) Terms of Reference.

Mr Loughlin informed the Board that, following a query from an external Board member, he has been liaising with the Secretary on durations of term for external members and on whether external members are bound by the *Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies*. Mr Loughlin recommended that appointment and other general provisions for external Board members should be standardised for consistency purposes.

Mr Loughlin informed the Board that the Audit & Risk Committee formally adopted its Terms of Reference.

It was agreed that Mr Loughlin would liaise with the Director and the Secretary on updating the Terms of References for the Board and its Committees.

It was agreed that the amended standing orders would be circulated for 29th June Board meeting.

The Audit & Risk Committee report and the financial pack were approved by the Board.

5.2 General Public Advisory Committee

a) Statement of principle on repatriation and restitution.

The Board noted the report. Prof James-Chakraborty informed the Board that, at its last meeting, GPAC had discussed the general principles of repatriation and restitution in the context of the NMI's collections. The Committee had approved the following statement of principle for circulation to the NMI Board for formal adoption:

“Like many museums with their origins in the 19th century, the National Museum of Ireland has legacy collections that do not reflect contemporary collecting practices or ethics. The repatriation or restitution of objects within these collections forms an important element of an overall process of decolonisation at the National Museum of Ireland to which we are committed. Key enablers of this work are:

- A case-by-case approach with a focus on research to ensure we acquire a full understanding of the provenance of each piece within the collection.
- Dissemination of information about our collections to ensure that communities around the globe are aware of what we hold and how we came to hold it.
- Collaboration and communication within and between museums both nationally and internationally to ensure a clear, coordinated and proactive approach.
- Enhance national and international advocacy to ensure the NMI has the required resources to support this work.”

The proposed statement of principle on repatriation and restitution was formally approved by the Board.

b) Online collections.

*Prof James-Chakraborty informed the Board that the Director had provided GPAC with an update on the NMI's online collections project. Some discussions took place on image accessibility for researchers and for public download. **It had been agreed by GPAC that an update on open resource should be noted as a matter for the next Board to consider. This was noted as an area of focus by the Board.***

c) Prof James-Chakraborty.

The Chair, members of the Board and the executive took this opportunity to extend their sincere thanks and gratitude to Prof James-Chakraborty who will be coming to the end of her term on the Board as NMI Board member and as the Chair of GPAC. On behalf of the Board and executive, the Chair wished Prof James-Chakraborty all the best with her future endeavors.

The report was approved by the Board.

5.3 Strategy & Engagement Committee.

The Board noted the report.

a) Mr Derek Flynn.

The Chair of the Strategy & Engagement Committee informed the Board that Mr Derek Flynn has expressed his interest in being re-appointed as an external member of the Strategy & Engagement Committee for a further one-year term.

The Board formally approved the appointment of Mr Flynn to the Strategy & Engagement Committee for a one-year term.

b) NMI conferences.

Dr King informed the Board that there is a conference planned for November 2021, which will be a collaboration between NMI curators and the National College of Art & Design (NCAD). This conference will provide a forum for discussion of current museum practices and debates in different national settings. Dr King commended the work of NMI's Education department in particular for their collaborative work with primary, secondary and third-level learning institutions.

c) Visitor experience.

Dr King informed the Board that NMI is undertaking a scoping exercise over the coming months on visitor experience.

d) Strategy & Engagement Committee priorities.

Dr King notified the Board that the Committee will be keeping audience engagement as a key agenda item as it transitions into a new term. Dr King told the Board that she was optimistic that the current development of NMI's communications strategy will be a valuable guide for the NMI for both internal and external communications.

e) Lance Wyman.

Dr King referred to the recent Lance Wyman/NMI seminar that took place online on 9th June, and proposed that public outreach events such as this could be considered by the NMI going forward.

The Director noted that the event was a great success and thanked Dr King for initiating the conversation with Lance Wyman and for making the event possible.

f) Outgoing Board members.

Dr King took this opportunity to thank outgoing Board members of the Strategy & Engagement Committee for their invaluable contributions to the Committee over the past year.

The report was approved by the Board.

5.4 Capital & Estates Committee.

The Board noted the report.

b) Governance and operational arrangements for Natural History capital project.

Mr Bowen notified the Board that he had a meeting with the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee, the Director and Ms Hurley to discuss the proposed governance arrangements for the Natural History project. Mr Bowen confirmed that the NMI has sought external advice on the matter and has submitted feedback to the DTCAGSM for their consideration.

c) Collections Resource Centre.

Mr Bowen informed the Board that NMI's Head of Operations, Ms Aoife Hurley is liaising with OPW on the Collections Resource Centre lease, however no updates have been received.

d) NMI – Archaeology.

It was agreed that the Director would follow up with Clerk of the Dáil and Secretary General, Houses of the Oireachtas Service, Peter Finnegan on the planned commencement of capital works at NMI – Archaeology, Kildare Street.

e) New external members.

Mr Bowen informed the Board that two external Board members, Mr Donagh Morgan and Mr Paul Nolan, attended their first Capital & Estates Committee on 19th May. Both members have been appointed to the Committee for five-year terms.

f) Deputy Patrick O'Donovan.

It was agreed that the Minister for Office of Public Works, Deputy Patrick O'Donovan would be invited to visit the 20th Century History of Ireland Galleries site at NMI – Decorative Arts & History, Collins Barracks, upon the formation of the new Board.

The report was formally approved by the Board.

5.5 Board Transition Committee.

The Chair provided Board members with an overview of discussions that recently took place between the Chairs of the Committees and the Director:

a) Training and external evaluation.

Induction training will take place in November 2021 and will be extended to external Board members. Outgoing board members will be invited to contribute to a review of their term at NMI and this will be undertaken by an external consultant. The Chair encouraged all outgoing Board members to participate in the review and thanked the Board members in advance for their time.

The Secretary agreed to arrange calls between the Chair and the two newest Board members, Dr Rogers and Dr O'Donnabhain for a check-in.

b) Committee membership.

The Secretary agreed to liaise with Board members on their preferences for Committee membership for the new term.

c) Handover letter to Minister Catherine Martin.

The Board noted the areas of focus proposed for inclusion in the Board's handover letter to Minister Catherine Martin.

The areas of focus were formally adopted by the Board for inclusion in the letter, with exception to



minor re-phrasing on a point in relation to developing stronger links with similar international institutions.

d) Remuneration.

The Board noted the summary on the Board's considered views on Board remuneration, which was approved by the Board Transition Committee on 1st June.

The note on remuneration was approved by the Board for the attention of DTCAGSM Secretary General, Katherine Licken.

e) Internal handover booklet for new Board.

The Secretary agreed to circulate a draft document of areas of focus and outstanding actions to the Chairs of the Committees to ensure a smooth transition to the new Board.

Ms Dillon agreed to circulate details on the arrangements for last Board meeting.

6.0. Date of next meeting.

It was agreed that the last meeting of the current Board would take place on 29th June at 11am for discussion and formal approval of NMI's budget for 2022.

End of meeting.