

## Board of the National Museum of Ireland

Minutes of Meeting of the Board

on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> June 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
<b>Apologies:</b>	Ms Mary Crotty	
<b>In attendance:</b>	Ms Lynn Scarff (Director, NMI) Dr Audrey Whitty (Head of Collections & Learning) Ms Jade Dillon (Secretary to the Board, NMI)	Ms Maria Kearns (Head of HR, 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. No apologies were conveyed, however it was noted that Ms Crotty would be joining the meeting at a later time and that Ms Shenton would need to leave the meeting early.

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

### 2. Minutes of the meeting of 16<sup>th</sup> April 2020 and matters arising

The minutes of the meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2020 were proposed by Mr Bowen and seconded by Professor Hook, with exceptions to two minor amendments. **The Secretary agreed to amend accordingly.**

#### *Matters arising*

The Chair informed the Board that the documents relating to the Director's Review have been received and the Review process has now been completed. The Chair thanked Dr King for her assistance in reviewing the Director's performance to date. The Board gave leave to the Chair and Dr King to undertake a mid-year check in with the Director. **The Secretary agreed to schedule a date for the meeting.**

### 3. Executive Report by the Chair and the Executive

The Board noted the Executive Report that was circulated before the meeting and the Report was taken as read. The Director highlighted key items in the Executive Report.

*a) Staff engagement and return to work onsite*

The Director informed the Board that NMI's COVID-19 Response Team continues to lead in preparation for a return to onsite working of NMI staff and a return of visitors on 29th June at NMI - Decorative Arts and History and NMI – Country Life and on the 20th July to NMI - Archaeology and NMI - Natural History.

The Director reported to the Board that all risk analyses, protocols, training, communication plans and documentation are underway for the planned opening dates of NMI, and highlighted that all plans are compliant with Government guidelines.

The Director reported that that she and members of the Executive participated in a series of staff Q&A online sessions during the month of May that coincided with the release of the Government's *Roadmap for Reopening Society and Business*.

The Director informed the Board that a number of staff webinars (plus Q&As) were also scheduled during May by Ms Maria Kearns in relation to return to onsite working at NMI. Anxiety during the pandemic, employee rights and employee mental health and wellbeing were the main areas of discussion.

*b) Museum Standards Programme Ireland*

The Director briefly reported on NMI's MSPI submission. The Board were notified that the deadline for NMI's MSPI application has been extended to September 2021 following discussions with the GPAC Committee and instruction from The Heritage Council. Dr Whitty informed the Board that a progress timeline outlining NMI's approved MSPI-related policies will be circulated to GPAC for review.

*c) Medieval Ireland Galleries*

Dr Whitty informed the Board of issues in relation to the air handling system in the *Medieval Ireland* Galleries in Kildare St and its impact on the collection, which was brought to the attention of GPAC on the 4th June 2020. The Executive informed the Committee that NMI has requested a complete replacement of the air handling system. The Executive informed the Board that a full report will be circulated to GPAC as soon as NMI receive more clarity on the next steps.

The Chair thanked the Director and Dr Whitty for their key updates and on behalf of the Board, conveyed appreciation for all the crisis management work that has been carried out by NMI staff over these past few months, particularly in the area of staff engagement.

*d) Board Recruitment*

The Chair explained to the Board that, although Board recruitment strategy/Board legacy was to be discussed at this meeting, it has been agreed that this will now be dealt with by the Board in September, pending updates and advice from the Department of Culture, Heritage & the Gaeltacht.



The Chair re-iterated that she participated in the shortlisting of applications for consideration by the Minister of Culture, Heritage & the Gaeltacht on the 4<sup>th</sup> March 2020. The Chair informed the Board that the process is currently at a standstill due to the transition to a new Government.

#### **4. Special Discussion Topic and Discussion: Community Engagement**

##### **Part A: Human Rights & Equality: the Chair of the Board**

The Chair highlighted the NMI's public service duty and referenced *Statutory Obligation Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014* in terms of NMI's role in promoting equality, inclusivity and diversity. The Chair referred to the *Black Lives Matters* movement protests in New York as a catalyst for museums worldwide in terms of how museums can be a space for discourse on contentious issues.

The Chair acknowledged the NMI's efforts in engaging with minority communities through workshops, events and exhibitions e.g. *A Travellers Journey*, *Rainbow Revolution* and *(A)dressing our Hidden Truths*, and suggested that efforts should be made to engage with local communities, particularly those who have been impacted by the pandemic.

**The Board agreed that a letter outlining NMI's priorities should be sent to the Minister of the Department of Culture, Heritage & the Gaeltacht.**

**The Board agreed that a letter outlining NMI's priorities should also be sent to the Chief Commissioner of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission.**

The above decisions were proposed by Mr Bowen and seconded by Prof James-Chakraborty.

The Chair welcomed the Director to present on NMI's priorities and community engagement strategies.

##### **Part B. NMI Priorities & Community Engagement Strategy: the Director**

The Director presented on NMI's priorities and community engagement strategies for the rest of 2020 and for the medium-long term. Upon discussions with the Chair and the NMI Executive, the Director posited that NMI will further deliver on pre-existing strategies and to create new ways to engage with audiences who are traditionally underrepresented in our Museums.

The Director stressed that NMI's community engagement ethos will be one that will evolve over time and be heavily dependent on NMI building trust with various local communities. The Director further stressed that the NMI is not initiating community engagement strategies as a 'box ticking exercise' but because the NMI believes it is important and recognises its duty as a public sector body under the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014. The three Pillars of Engagement for NMI will be as follows:

- 1. Community Engagement:** Developing a strategy, vision and an implementation plan on how we can better engage local and underrepresented communities in our Museums at all levels from programme delivery and development to governance.
- 2. Diversity and Equality:** Developing a strategy, vision and an implementation plan on how we ensure NMI team and NMI Board are diverse and representative of communities across Ireland.



**3. Addressing Collection Provenance:** Developing a strategy vision and implementation plan that examines, understands, engages and disseminates the provenance of the Museum's collection and its colonial legacy.

*a) Key Performance Indicators*

A discussion on NMI's Key Performance Indicators followed. The Director reported that the NMI's Audience Research Group is currently working on developing new ways of identifying and reporting on visitor engagement and public interests. The Director informed the Board that the Education Department launched *Museum at Home* on the NMI website yesterday. *Museum at Home* can be found on each NMI site page under the Engage & Learn section and contains a selection of activities based on the collections at the four NMI sites.

The Director informed the Board that the NMI is planning for hub and spoke events that will temporarily replace onsite events/exhibition launches/workshops and the procurement of audio visual and broadcasting infrastructure is in train.

*c) Addressing Collection Provenance*

Dr Whitty informed the Board that a Collections Provenance Working Group has been established to assist in developing a strategy for dealing with NMI objects that have a colonial past. Dr Whitty stressed repatriation is an area that NMI is mindful of and that she is optimistic that the strategies, which will be agreed upon within the Collections Provenance Working Group, in consultation with our Board, will pave the way for a more intentionally inclusive collection.

Dr Whitty confirmed to the Board that items related to collections provenance and NMI's history of collecting will be brought to the attention of GPAC.

**5. Report to the Board from Committees**

The Chair thanked the Board for circulating their reviewed subcommittee priorities to the Board and welcomed the Chairs of the subcommittees to report on key items discussed at subcommittee level:

***a) Strategy & Engagement Committee***

The Board noted the Strategy & Engagement Committee Report. Dr King informed the Board that it was agreed by the subcommittee that the subcommittee name be changed from 'Development & Strategy Committee' to the 'Strategy & Engagement Committee', as this would better reflect the goals of the Committee.

**The change of name of the subcommittee was proposed by Mr Nelson and seconded by Ms Moroney.**

**Dr King listed the subcommittee's top priorities and these were ratified by the Board:**

1. The Committee will advise and have oversight on audience development, including audience research with a focus on online engagement and with website and social media analysis.
2. The Committee will advise and have oversight in the development of Museum Supporters programmes and major commercial events, retail, MOUs and partner agreements.
3. The Committee will advise and have oversight of NMI staff and organisational development, including outcomes of roles and responsibilities of NMI Departments



mapping onto best practice for contemporary Museum.

4. The Committee will advise and have oversight of NMI's identity and branding strategies, including the manifestation of values in all of the NMI offers and visitor experience, as well as stakeholder engagement and corporate identity.

**The Board approved the priorities of NMI's Strategy & Engagement subcommittee and the Chair requested that the above priorities be included in the Board's Standing Orders Appendix. The Secretary agreed to add accordingly.**

***b) Audit and Risk Committee***

The Board noted the Audit & Risk Committee's Report and Mr Loughlin gave the Board an overview on the subcommittee's key updates.

Mr Loughlin reported that NMI's Financial Statements 2019 are currently being finalised by NMI's Head of Finance & Procurement, Mr Mark Sherry in consultation with the subcommittee, and will be reviewed by the subcommittee at their next meeting scheduled to take place on the 9<sup>th</sup> July 2020.

Mr Loughlin raised the concern that NMI's finance may be significantly impacted due to the COVID-19 pandemic and that it is essential that NMI's budget management continue to be accurately recorded by NMI's Finance Unit.

The Board noted the COVID-19 Risk Register and agreed that it accurately reflects how the pandemic has impacted NMI. Mr Loughlin highlighted that NMI's Operations department has been particularly affected financially. Mr Loughlin suggested that the COVID-19 Risk Register could be incorporated into NMI's Corporate Risk Register.

**The Board approved the merging of the two Registers.**

Mr Loughlin informed the Board that the Audit & Risk Committee signed off on the satisfactory report from Mazars – the internal auditors – on the Statement of Internal Financial Controls on the 9<sup>th</sup> June 2020. Accordingly, the Board in noting the SIFC was satisfied that it had met its obligation to review the effectiveness of its internal financial control systems, as it is required to do annually. Mr Loughlin confirmed that the NMI's procurement processes have vastly improved since the appointment of NMI's Head of Finance & Procurement, Mr Mark Sherry, and that improved compliance was recorded by the internal auditor.

On behalf of Mr Sherry, Mr Loughlin reported that procurement training at NMI has been well-received and that procedures have been further improved upon to minimize any risk of systemic non-compliance.

On behalf of the Audit & Risk Committee, Mr Loughlin expressed his sincere thanks to Mr Sherry for his work on significantly improving NMI's financial reporting and procedures.

***c) General Public Advisory Committee***

The Board noted the GPAC Report and subcommittee priorities document. Prof James-Chakraborty gave the Board an overview of the subcommittee's key updates:





Prof James-Chakraborty informed the Board that GPAC agreed that the primary focus areas for the Committee entail having oversight and providing guidance in the areas of Collections, Programming, Research and Partnerships.

**The Board ratified GPAC's Priorities document for 2020 and the Chair requested that the priorities be included in the Board's Standing Orders Appendix. The Secretary agreed to add accordingly.**

*Museum Standards Programme of Ireland (MSPI)*

NMI's Documentation Policy and Conservation Policy were approved by GPAC on the 4<sup>th</sup> June 2020.

**The Board ratified the two Collections policies and the decision was proposed by Prof James-Chakraborty and seconded by Dr King.**

***d) Capital & Estates Committee***

The Board noted the Capital & Estates Report and Mr Bowen gave the Board an overview of the subcommittee's key updates.

Mr Bowen informed the Board that the Capital & Estates Committee's priorities for the next 18 months will be guided by NMI's – *Strategic Plan 2019-2022* and will focus on providing advice and support to the NMI Executive on NMI's masterplan capital and infrastructural projects.

**The Board ratified the Capital & Estates Committee's priorities for 2020.**

Mr Bowen notified the Board that it has been agreed with the Audit & Risk Committee that the Audit & Risk Committee would provide any oversight required in terms of capital expenditure.

**It was agreed that the Audit & Risk Committee's Charter would be updated accordingly for the next full Board meeting.**

The Board noted the Capital & Estates Committee's Terms of Reference and some minor amendments were suggested.

**It was agreed that the revised Terms of Reference would be circulated to the Board for the next full Board meeting.**

**6. Date of next full Board meeting**

24<sup>th</sup> September 2020 at 10am with a supplementary 1-hour Board meeting taking place on the 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2020.

End of meeting.