



Board of the National Museum of Ireland

Minutes of Meeting of the Board (COVID-19 Update) on Thursday 16th April 2020,

Via video-conference

Present:	Ms Catherine Heaney (Chair) Ms Helen Shenton Professor Ingrid Hook Professor Kathleen James-Chakraborty Dr Linda King Mr Paolo Viscardi Ms Mary Crotty	Ms Denise Moroney Mr Declan Nelson Professor Mary O'Dowd Dr Andrew Power Ms Judith McCarthy Mr Ambrose Loughlin Mr John Bowen
Apologies:	None	
In attendance:	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) 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 and the Executive for joining the meeting via video conference. The Chair expressed her sympathies to Ms Kearns whose mother, Ms Margaret Kearns, passed away recently due to the COVID-19 virus.

The Chair proposed that the meeting today would focus predominantly on NMI's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Executive's updates and ratifying documents that had been previously circulated to the Board, including NMI Collections policies.

The Agenda was proposed by Ms Moroney and seconded by Dr Power.

2. Minutes of the meeting of 23rd January 2020 and matters arising

The minutes of the meeting on 23rd January 2020 were proposed by Ms Moroney and seconded by Mr Nelson.

Director's Review

The Chair informed the Board that the review of Director's documents is outstanding due to technical difficulties with the PMDS system. The Chair advised that this would be rectified soon.

3. Executive Report by the Chair and the Director

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) Eileen Gray

The Director updated the Board on NMI's visit to the Bard Graduate Center in New York on the 28th February 2020. The exhibition was attended by the Chair of the Board, the Director, Dr Audrey Whitty, Dr Jennifer Goff and Dr Linda King. The Director informed the Board that she and the Chair of the Board had a meeting with the Consul General of Ireland, Ciaran Madden, that Mr Madden was invited to speak at the opening of the *Eileen Gray* exhibition launch. The Director reported that the visit was an excellent opportunity for NMI and allowed the NMI team and NMI Board to create an infrastructure to enable future community building initiatives in the US.

The Director informed the Board that, due to the COVID-19 related travel restrictions, the *Eileen Gray* loan to the Bard Graduate Center will be extended into 2020, date yet to be confirmed.

The Chair expressed formal thanks to all those involved in the substantial loan of Eileen Gray material; with special thanks to Dr Jennifer Goff for her renowned expertise on Eileen Gray. The Board agreed that Dr Goff is a truly excellent asset to NMI.

b) Talk at the American Irish Historical Society

The Director reported that as part of NMI's successful trip to New York, she and Dr Whitty delivered a talk to a number of guests at the American Irish Historical Society on NMI future plans and programmes.

c) Re-scheduling of Exhibitions, Programmes 2020

The Director informed the Board that NMI's Executive team have been liaising with Heads of departments on the re-scheduling of exhibition launches and education programmes. NMI's Head of Operations, Ms Aoife Hurley has created a Gantt chart that outlines re-scheduling timelines and will revise according to COVID-19 related government updates.

The Director informed the Board that many events scheduled to take place in 2020 have been postponed and that NMI's Finance Unit is prioritising the processing of payments for event organisers, artists and workshop facilitators.

d) Loans

The Director reported that physical restrictions have had an impact on and delivery and returning of loans to and from NMI and that Ms Hurley has also included loans within the Gantt chart mentioned above.



The Director informed the Board that the Executive team sent a letter to the Directors of the 12 Local Museums requesting an update on 1) the current security measures and conservation measures in place during site closure, and 2) on the current conditions of loans from the NMI.

As Ireland's National Museum, the Executive Team assured the Directors of Local Museums that NMI is fully supportive of all cultural institutions during this time and will assist in any way possible to alleviate any pressures brought on by the COVID-19 crisis.

The Director informed the Board that concurrently a Letter of Reassurance will be sent to all institutions with material on loan to the NMI later today. This letter will be sent with a contact list of all Departments that are involved in the processing of loans.

Ms Shenton joined the meeting.

e) MoU with NCAD

The Director informed the Board that on the 18th February 2020, NMI and the National College of Art & Design (NCAD) announced a new partnership, which will see the two institutions collaborate on a series of projects over the next three years. Under the partnership, NMI will work with NCAD on research, contemporary collecting, academic funding applications, public talks, a research symposium and a major international conference.

f) NMI Recruitment

The Director updated the Board on NMI current staff vacancies.

g) NMI Board Recruitment

The Chair gave the Board an update on the recruitment process for the two Board vacancies. The Chair of the Board participated in the shortlisting of applications for consideration by the Minister of Culture, Heritage & the Gaeltacht on the 4th March 2020.

The Chair advised that a future recruitment strategy should be a priority for the Board for the next meeting.

4. Documents circulated for noting and COVID-19 update document:

Standing Orders 2020

The Standing Orders were formally ratified by the Board.

Audit & Risk Committee Priorities

The Audit & Risk Committee Priorities document was noted by the Board.

Cessation of NMI's HR Committee

The Board formally noted the letter sent to the Minister of Culture, Heritage & the Gaeltacht on the 13th January 2020 regarding the cessation of NMI's HR Committee due to the Committee meeting its objectives. The Chair reiterated that any HR updates will now be brought to the attention of the Audit & Risk Committee.



COVID-19 Update

The Board noted the COVID-19 Response document circulated prior to the meeting. The Director highlighted the key actions that NMI had undertaken, and continues to undertake, during the COVID-19 pandemic. .

The Director informed the Board that a COVID-19 Response team was established on the 5th March 2020. NMI was closed to the public at 6pm on the 12th March 2020 and a rota of Visitor Security Officers (VSO) and Facility Officers (FO) was rolled out for the security of all NMI sites. Following the Irish government's announcement from An Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar TD on the 27th March, all NMI sites were fully closed, with the exception of access to facilitate specific security, collections care and emergency needs. The Response Team had meetings via video-conference every two days and, as of 15th April, will continue to meet on a weekly basis with supplemental meetings when required.

Remote Working

The Director informed the Board that a significant number of NMI staff are now enabled with remote access via NMI's VPN and are set up to facilitate remote meetings. The Director expressed special thanks to NMI's I.C.T team who went above and beyond their day to day work to enable remote access for NMI staff for the first time.

The Director reported that Health and Safety guidelines in relation to remote working were circulated to all NMI staff and that each manager is taking responsibly of their team's working arrangements and are in regular contact with their teams. Virtual Coffee Mornings (videoconference and telecom) have also been set up on a weekly basis across all sites.

Engagement with the public during closure of NMI

The Director reported that NMI staff have been very active in promoting NMI and its collections via social media platforms. NMI's new website is due to be launched next week and will also be the home to a new online gallery that will be on the theme of Resilience. The Resilience online gallery will feature some 28 images that represent resilience throughout history. Ms Moroney commented on the online gallery and wished NMI good luck on the launch.

The Board were informed that NMI's Head of Collections & Learning, Dr Audrey Whitty and NMI's Head of Operations, Ms Aoife Hurley are currently working on re-scheduling timelines for all 2020 and 2021 exhibitions, programming and loans.

5. Finance, HR and Risk

The Director gave an update on NMI Finance. Invoices are continuing to be processed and priority has been given to small businesses and artists.

Ms Hurley gave an update on NMI's Capital Projects. Ms Hurley informed the Board that the decant of Natural History continues to be a main priority and that a request for an early drawdown on funding to cover the costs of the decant, transportation and storage has been sent to the Department of Culture, Heritage & the Gaeltacht for approval.

HR

The Director informed the Board that due to COVID-19 related implications, the recruitment process has been put on hold temporarily. NMI has currently volunteered fifteen staff for re-assignment in the first wave, none of these staff have yet to be reassigned. The NMI Business Continuity Plan prepared by the management team in relation to staff requirements for key functions in NMI will guide any further requests for additional staff nominees for re-assignment if the first wave of 15 staff are redeployed.

Risk

The Board noted the COVID-19 Risk Register. Mr Loughlin posited that NMI's COVID-19 Risk Register is an excellent piece of work and could serve as a template for future Risk Registers.

6. Phase 2 – re-opening of NMI under COVID-19 physical distancing restrictions

The Director and Ms Hurley informed the Board that the COVID-19 Response team and Head of Departments are currently planning for what NMI may need to implement once sites are re-opened with physical distancing restrictions in place. Ms Hurley informed the Board that she is currently working on a document outlining the step-by-step logistics of Phase 2 – including re-arrangement of office spaces, rotas, crowd control etc.

On behalf of the Board, the Chair thanked the Director for her leadership during the crisis and thanked all NMI staff for quickly adapting and continuing to work in exceptional circumstances. Dr Power expressed thanks to NMI staff for their commitment to promoting NMI via social media platforms, with special thanks to Mr Viscardi and NMI's Keeper of Natural History, Mr Nigel Monaghan for their engaging stories.

7. NMI Board Activity during COVID-19

Due to the unpredictability of the COVID-19 crisis, the Chair suggested that the Board should plan for the immediate future only. The Chair posited that the role of the Board, particularly during the crisis, is to ensure that the Board are providing support to NMI's Executive Team in their decision-making and strategic priorities. The Chair advised that members should make contact with the Director's Office if they have any advice or support to provide.

8. A.O.B

Policies & Strategies

The Board formally ratified the following NMI Collections Policies and Strategies and were proposed by Prof James-Chakraborty and seconded by Mr Bowen:

1. Library policy
2. Archives policy
3. Learning policy
4. Handling Collections policy



5. Learning strategy
6. Art & Industry Acquisitions strategy
7. Contemporary Collecting strategy

Professor James-Chakraborty expressed thanks to Dr Whitty and the Collections & Learning Department for their hard work on the Policies and Strategies.

Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference for the Capital & Estates Committee was noted. The Chair requested that any comments should be sent to the Secretary to the Board and Mr Bowen.

9. Date of next meeting

It is hoped that the next Board meeting will take place in June 2020. The Chair thanked everyone and wished everyone good health.

End of meeting.