

**HISTORIC ROYAL PALACES  
MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
Kew, Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2008**

**Minutes**

- Present:** Charles Mackay (Chairman)  
Sir Alan Reid (Deputy Chairman)  
Dawn Austwick  
Bridget Cherry  
Sue Farr  
John Hamer  
Sir Trevor McDonald  
Malcolm Reading  
Sir Hugh Roberts  
Sir Roger Wheeler
- Apologies:** Sir Adrian Montague
- In attendance:** Michael Day - Chief Executive  
John Barnes - Conservation and Learning Director  
Keith Cima - Governor of the Tower of London  
Rod Giddins - Palaces Group Director  
Sally O'Neill - Finance Director  
Alyson Lawton - Trust and Company Secretary  
Lucy Worsley - Chief Curator and Sandra Botterell - Head of Marketing (item 4 only)

**1. Chairman's comments**

- 1.1 The Chairman noted that apologies had been received from Sir Adrian Montague.

**2. Minutes of the previous meetings**

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2008 were approved.

**3. Matters Arising**

- 3.1 There were no matters arising from the last meeting.

**4. Strategic Development:**

**Transform the way that visitors explore their story**

- 4.1 The Board noted the content of the Palaces Group Director's report and progress made during the last year. The Chairman asked about signage. The Palaces Director explained there would be improvements in the next few months. The Chief Executive explained that he had been unhappy about the delays in this project and that the Executive Board had recently discussed an action plan to improve progress with delivery and installation. The Chairman suggested that Trustees might see examples. The Conservation & Learning Director noted that these had been installed at Kew Palace and Trustees could view them after the meeting.
- 4.2 The Palaces Group Director then introduced four short presentations
- 4.3 The Head of Marketing spoke about the Palaces Personalities project. The Board asked for clarification about and an example of personality characteristics that were emerging and how they might be applied. The Board agreed that this was an important subject and requested a further briefing at a future board meeting.

- 4.4 The Chief Curator explained the background, definition and plans for Storytelling. This was a concept about encouraging people to be curious and was not literally telling a story. Trustees suggested that with a varied audience, the challenge would be to find the right balance. Bridget Cherry asked how further information might be satisfied in terms of publications. The Chief Curator explained that the new guidebooks followed the storytelling principles. The economics of our publications was the subject of a current review which would be brought to the Trustees in due course. The website also shows a storytelling approach and was a good source to discover more.
- 4.5 As part of the requirement to replace the existing ticketing system by February 2010, the Palaces Director talked about visitor engagement systems, which would include reviewing new opportunities for flexible ticketing, customer information and convenience. Trustees would be asked to consider the business case in January 2009. The Chairman felt the challenge of running two systems in parallel during the transition should not be underestimated. A benchmarking study would be part of the project to identify organisations who were doing well in this area.
- 4.6 The Governor of the Tower of London talked about family initiatives and becoming more family focused. A range of improvements had been identified and the Executive would shortly be considering how to take these forward. Trustees welcomed the family focus and gave their comments. The way that families are received by people was almost as important as the product, as families could be quite nervous going to historic places. The focus on families should be entirely integrated with the product and it should be possible to provide fun and interesting things for families around our core associations. Trustees also asked what might be provided for teenagers. Some Trustees also felt that pricing for families was very important and welcomed more than one option.

## 5. Monitoring Performance

### 5.1 Chief Executive's Reviews for April and May

#### 5.1.1 The Board noted the contents of the Chief Executive's Reviews for April and May.

The Chief Executive briefed the Board on recent developments with the Kensington Palace Development Project and the application for a Heritage Lottery Fund Grant.

The Board were pleased to note that the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) had re-authorised the contract with Historic Royal Palaces for the management of the five palaces for a further 10 years with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008.

The Board were also pleased to hear that HB Allen Trust had recently made a grant of £200k towards the White Tower project.

The Chief Executive also reported his recent meeting with DCMS and his proposals for changes to the relationship in the light of the DCMS' aspirations for a "lighter touch". All the Secretary of State's targets for 2007/08 had been met.

The Conservation and Learning Director gave a verbal update on developments regarding the Jolly Boatman Site at Hampton Court.

The Board noted the election of a new Mayor for London and discussed how they might engage him in our work.

### 5.2 Financial Performance for the year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2008

#### 5.2.1 The Board noted the contents of the Finance Director's report and approved the proposed year end designations including the carry forward of £2.3 million.

### 5.3 Performance for the first weeks of the year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009

5.3.1 The Board noted the report and that there was no underlying change in visitor numbers compared with last year.

#### 5.4 Reserves Policy

5.4.1 The Board noted the contents of the report which was in the same format as last year. Sir Alan Reid reported that at the recent Audit Committee meeting, the National Audit Office had made the point that Historic Royal Palaces was a model example of reserves accounting in the sector. The Board agreed the proposed free reserves levels, given a realistic assessment of risks associated with key income and expenditure streams.

### 6. Governance and Organisation

#### 6.1 Audit Committee held on April 10<sup>th</sup> and revised terms of reference

6.1.1 The Board noted the minutes of the Audit Committee dated April 10<sup>th</sup>. The Deputy Chairman as Chairman of the Audit Committee noted that only 50% of the members had been present. He identified the key discussions. The Committee had asked for a clearer linkage between the Internal Audit work programme and the overall corporate objectives. This would be done for the 09/10 work programme. Noting the scale of the IT work, he also suggested that Trustees might like to understand more about the scope of this.

The Board also agreed the revised terms of reference for the Committee. The Committee will review Trustees' register of interests twice yearly and the Directors' once a year. The Chairman asked Trustees when they had any changes between the six monthly reporting to advise the Trust and Company Secretary so that she could report it at the next Trustees' meeting.

Members of the Audit Committee noted that the next meeting would now start at 8.30 am and not at 9.30am as reported in the minutes.

#### 6.2 AGM of HRPE Ltd

6.2.1 The Board noted the contents of the report and nominated Michael Day to represent their interests at the AGM of HRPE Ltd on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2008.

#### 6.3 The next Trustee appointment in Jan 2009

6.3.1 The Board noted the contents of the report and that this was a DCMS appointment. Bridget Cherry would step down as a Trustee at the end of December 2008 after six years as a Trustee. Hugh Roberts noted her invaluable contribution. Trustees debated the specific skills which might benefit the board and which would form part of their recommendation to the DCMS. However equally if not more important were the generic skills required which included an enthusiasm about all aspects of the organisation and good governance skills. The Board agreed to form a Nominations Committee chaired by the Chairman. Its members would be Sir Alan Reid, Dawn Austwick and John Hamer.

### 7. Projects and Expenditure

#### 7.1 Base Court, Hampton Court Palace (Henry's Arena)

7.1.1 The Board noted the content of the report for the project, which would need to start on site after the Music Festival without delay. Discussions were still taking place. The Conservation and Learning Director was asked for his latest estimate of costs. The Board approved the project with Mansell's as the main contractor, contingent on the stone being ordered by them and asked for a report on progress in July. The Board asked whether there was any way of showing the archaeology to visitors. The Conservation and Learning Director explained what might be done.

**7.2 Henry VIII at the Tower of London- *Dressed to Kill***

**7.2.1** The Governor of the Tower of London introduced his report about the joint project with Royal Armouries for the White Tower exhibition to celebrate Henry VIII as military monarch and sporting hero. Sue Farr asked about the marketing budget. She also stressed the importance of complementing plans for Henry at Hampton Court together with a joined up retail offer. The Board agreed to the project and the cost commitment of £350k. The Royal Armouries will enter into a contract with the design and construction companies to deliver the project to the required timetable.

**8. Any other Business**

**8.1** Sue Farr reported good progress on the design and copy for the Annual Review 2007-2008. The text would be circulated to Trustees tomorrow for their comment.

**8.2** The Chairman gave each Trustee a copy of the brochure for the £20m Campaign for Historic Royal Palaces and asked Trustees to contact the Development Team for further copies.

**9. Date of Next Meeting: Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> June at The Banqueting House, Whitehall.** This will be at RUSI next door but there will be a visit to the Banqueting House following the meeting.