

COUNCIL
Thursday, 1 July 2021
Via Zoom
Strategic Discussion 11.30-12.45
Formal meeting 1.30 pm

Prof. Martin Millett, President, in the Chair

Present: Mr Stephen Dunmore, Treasurer
Dr Heather Sebire, Hon. Secretary
Ms Nathalie Cohen
Dr Tim Schroder
Ms Victoria Bryant
Prof. Roey Sweet
Dr Bob Bewley
Dr Emily Cole
Prof. Vince Gaffney
Dr Sam Lucy

In attendance: Mr John Lewis, General Secretary
Ms Dunia Garcia-Ontiveros, Head of Library and Museum Collections (formal meeting only)
Dr Linda Grant, Governance Officer
Mr Dominic Wallis, Head of Development

Apologies: John Hines

Strategic Discussion 11.30-12.45

As this was the first Council meeting chaired by the incoming President and with five new Trustees, all members introduced themselves.

Two topics were discussed: the proposed affiliate membership scheme, and the BH campaign.

A. Affiliate membership scheme

The Head of Development (HoD) talked to a paper previously circulated outlining the launch of the affiliate membership scheme, already approved in principle by Council. The offer was presented, together with a timetable working towards a Fellowship vote on the scheme, via a new Order, at the Anniversary Meeting in April 2022, and a launch immediately thereafter.

- i) Figures in the paper are taken from the business plan and may increase. The HoD will seek start-up funding to cover the first two years of costs. The Gen. Sec. remarked that the modelled membership figures are conservative.
- ii) In response to a question of why *AntJ* is not included in the membership package, the Gen. Sec. explained that it would be prohibitively expensive with a quote from CUP of £167 p.a. **ACTION:** HoD to ask the Publications Manager to see if this can be negotiated down with CUP.

- iii) In response to a question of why the scheme cannot be launched earlier than Spring 2022, the Gov. Officer explained that the introduction of a new Order for affiliate membership has to be treated as a Statute reform with a Fellowship consultation period. Rather than call an EGM for the Fellowship to vote on the Order, voting will take place at the Anniversary Meeting.
- iv) Trustees agreed that while they are all supportive of the scheme, there will likely be some resistance amongst the Fellowship. The Gen. Sec. noted that this has been under discussion since the 1920s, and that many Fellows do not use BH or the Library. The typical response rate to consultations is about 10% of the Fellowship and this may come from those who are against the scheme. However, Council recognised that opening up BH will have a positive impact on the public perception of the Society and its standing as a charitable organisation committed to a more transparent and open public access. The Treasurer added that recasting the public face of the Society is important but that the affiliate scheme should also have a positive impact on the financial sustainability of the Society.
- v) Discussing the differences between affiliate membership and Fellowship, the Gen. Sec. noted that there may be some cannibalisation with some Fellows switching to affiliate membership. The next stage should be to look at the nomination process for Fellowship, to make scrutiny more rigorous and restore prestige to the Fellowship.
- vi) The President will work with the Gen. Sec. and HoD, and will sign a letter on behalf of Council to promote the affiliate scheme to the Fellowship as part of the consultation process.
- vii) The HoD was thanked warmly for his paper and presentation, and he left the meeting at 12.00

B. BH Campaign

- i) For the benefit of new trustees, the Gen. Sec. gave a summary of the history of the BH lease issue and the campaign. The two aims of the campaign were defined as:
 - a) the public/political campaign to stay at BH on an affordable basis
 - b) preparing the Fellowship for a transition to plan B, moving from BH
- ii) Following the Westminster Hall debate on 8 June 2021, MHCLG sent a letter tweaking the previous proposal and a rejection letter was sent in reply from all the Courtyard Societies (letters circulated with Council papers). As Robert Jenrick, the Secretary of State, is unsympathetic to the plight of the Societies, David Attenborough has written directly to the Prime Minister requesting that the PM meets with the Presidents of the Societies at Downing Street. Back-route contacts with 10 Downing Street are continuing.
- iii) The four Societies will continue to campaign until the autumn, and plan to increase the public impact by e.g. making the Attenborough letter public. There is a planned article coming out in support of the Societies in *The Sunday Telegraph*. The Societies need to be ready to respond publicly and loudly in the public sphere, while still striving to get the issue moved out of the hands of property advisors and civil servants, and to a form of ministerial resolution.
- iv) The Gen. Sec. went on to report on the work that has started for Plan B, if the Society has to move from BH. Papers having been previously circulated, the Gen. Sec. reported on the costs of moving versus staying. Available properties as provided by property consultants are mostly uninspiring and in locations that would mean the effective death of the Society. The only available and acceptable option so far is in York, and this is also the most expensive. In the long run, moving would be less expensive than staying, given the work that would need to be done on BH.
- v) The Gen. Sec. presented estimated costs as c.£20-24m to purchase a building in Greater London, c.£26m in Mayfair. Funding will need to be raised to move but this would also be an opportunity for the Society to reinvent itself and become a truly national society. MHCLG are showing no inclination to agree a long lease, and currently capital is being diverted into rent. However 'star' objects from the collection will have to be sold in order to raise money to purchase a building, and this will have

- to be done in advance so that cash is available when suitable properties come on the market. Processes for disposal will be looked at over the summer, starting with objects on long-term loans.
- vi) It was recognised that this is a major project and that a project board will have to be established comprising consultants, staff and trustees.
 - vii) The President thanked the Gen. Sec. warmly for the thorough and detailed work that has been done, and opened the matter for questions and discussion.
 - viii) The President summarised that the Society wishes to stay at BH, if possible, but will continue to explore other options including possible partnerships in tandem with the campaign. There are misgivings about selling objects, but the Government needs to know that the Society may have no choice. The effect of the campaign will be known in the next two months and if it is not successful, then communication with the Fellowship needs to be planned from September/October. The President agreed with a comment from the Treasurer that the Society needs to ensure the Government do not think that selling objects to pay the rent is a viable solution: the rent is still unsustainable.

Formal Council Meeting 1.30 pm

[Head of Library and Museum Collection joined the meeting]

- 19/21 The President formally welcomed the new trustees, and apologies were noted. The President then announced the resignation of Prof. Chris Scull as Director with immediate effect: he expressed Council and the Society's gratitude to Chris for all his work especially on Publications and Research Committees, the Manifesto and on less visible but important matters. Council approved the suggestion that Dr John Cooper be co-opted as Director until nominations and elections are held at the next Anniversary Meeting. [Post-meeting, John Cooper accepted].
- 20/21 Health and Safety Matters
The Gen. Sec. reported that there have been no accidents. Risk assessments have taken place at both BH and KM, and the actions that have come out of the asbestos and legionella surveys are being implemented.
- 21/21 Minutes and Matters arising
 - i) The minutes of the Council Meeting of 11 March 2021, having been circulated, were agreed and will be signed on return to BH.
 - ii) There were no matter arising.
- 22/21 Strategic Business Plan: Quarter 1 Progress Report and Response to Covid
Papers having been previously circulated, the Gen. Sec. reported:
 - i) A grant of £75k from the Covid-related Cultural Recovery Fund has been spent, as required, by the end of June 2021.
 - ii) An interim solution to the problems with the balloting system is underway, pending reforms to the nominations process.
 - iii) The huge increase of attendees to the seminar/lecture programme since events have been live-streamed has been eye-opening, and all events will continue on a hybrid basis.
 - iv) The first Contested Heritage event, Intertwined Histories: The Legacies of Colonialism and Slavery took place on 24 June 2021, and was very successful with overwhelmingly positive feedback. Thanks were given to the Governance Officer and Events and Communications Manager for organising this, with the support of the EDWG.

- v) The Kingston University research collaboration had been a success thanks to the hard work of the Library & Collections team and the Events and Communications Manager.
- vi) KMPPF continues to progress and work is now being down on the interior decorations. A new Learning & Outreach Officer is in place at KM.
- vii) A Communications Assistant has been appointed at BH. Both new posts are employed by Lampada and enrolled in the NEST pension scheme.

23/21 Formal conclusions from strategic discussions

- i) Council approved the affiliate membership plan and timetable.

24/21 SAL Accommodation

- i) Council agreed, following the strategic discussions, that Plan B goes ahead in tandem with BH lease discussions and that alternative options are explored.
- ii) It was agreed that the valuation of key objects should proceed and feed into the campaign.

24/21 EDWG Report

A paper having been previously circulated, the Chair of the EDWG asked Council for a timetable for implementation, and how the role of the EDWG is envisaged moving forward.

- i) In response to a question, the Treasurer reminded Council that the Contested Heritage statement put together by Policy Committee is available on the Society's website.
- ii) The Chair of EDWG noted that the group is very keen to push ahead with a survey of the Fellowship and requested that the cost of the survey and necessary staff resources is budgeted for. It was also agreed that this should be timed carefully so as not to cloud the BH issue when communicating with the Fellowship.
- iii) EDWG will continue to support contested heritage events.
- iv) The President thanked the EDWG Chair and asked Council to endorse the recommendations in the report which was agreed. Progress will be reported to Council, and EDWG matters will become a standing item on Council agendas. It was suggested that a Fellowship Committee be established to oversee nominations and the affiliate membership scheme, that the EDWG should be rolled into this committee which will be chaired, ex officio, by the President. The President will present more details at next Council.
- v) It was agreed that the EDWG report should be published on the website and in SALON.

ACTION

25/21 Ethical Conduct Body Update

Papers having been circulated, Council noted the revised Terms of Reference, and ECB membership, previously approved by email. These have been posted on the website.

26/21 Treasurer's Report

Papers having been previously circulated, the Treasurer reported:

- i) 2020-21 Management Accounts: the summary shows headline performance against the original budget, not the revised Covid budget. Essentially, the Society has continued to tread water this year with the additional impact of Covid. Capital drawdown and liquidated capital has been used to pay the rent. There has been lost income from the delayed opening of KM due to Covid, and the loss of the room hire business at BH. This has been somewhat offset by Covid-specific grants. There will be a fuller financial discussion at October Council.
- ii) The Gen. Sec. added that this has been a very difficult year and praised the staff for keeping things going through Covid. Loss of income has been a big issue, combined

with USS pension increases in October 2021: the 5-year forward projections will be re-done to reflect this.

- ii) Finance Committee minutes having been previously circulated, Council approved the amoval of debtors [Finance 12/21i] in August.
- iii) The Treasurer reported on the valuation of the investment portfolio which was £15,658,933 in the middle of March 2021; £16,067,796 on 11 June 2021; and £16,098,257 on 25 June 2021. There is an upward trajectory through the markets remain volatile. Sarasins were thanked for managing the portfolio adroitly through the pandemic.
- iv) The Treasurer reported that future liabilities to the USS pension scheme are being somewhat mitigated through setting up Lampada. The USS debt monitoring may not apply to the Society as it is based on a minimum income or assets of £50m, but the Society is still liable for the deficit surcharge.

27/21 Director's Report

In the absence of a Director, the minutes of Morris Committee of 13 May 2021, and Publications Committee of 13 May 2021 had been previously circulated.

28/21 Policy Report

- i) The Treasurer reported that the Society's response to HE's Industrial Heritage Strategy consultation has been posted on the website.
- ii) The President reported that partnerships are being explored to progress discussions around the Future of Archaeology manifesto, as well as a possible conference. Any volunteers from the new trustees should contact the President or Gen. Sec.

29/21 Secretary's Report

Minutes of the 3 June 2021 Library and Collections Committee having been previously circulated, the Hon. Sec. reported:

- i) Digitisation of the minute books is being progressed.
- ii) Ancestry UK have agreed to digitise, index and make available the Croft Lyons cards. Matthew Payne was thanked for helping to progress this.
- iii) A majority of Library/Collections committee had agreed to sell the Gillray prints, a valuation is being done, and the logistics of a sale are being worked on. This was approved by Council.
- iv) The Henry VIII online exhibition is now live: the Museum Collections Manager was thanked for all her hard work, and thanks were also given to the co-curators, Dr John Cooper and Prof. Maurice Howard. Now that the digital platform has been created, with some input from the Events & Communications Manager, it can be reused for future online exhibitions.
- v) There has been a soft launch of the CMS on 23 June 2021. It was noted that existing museum records are not great; and that an official launch is being planned.

30/21 Committee Members List and 2021-22 Meetings Schedule

Papers having been circulated, the membership list and meetings schedule were approved.

31/21 Nominations, resignations and deaths of Fellows

The Gen. Sec. reported that since 11 March 2021, there have been 15 Fellows deceased, 7 resignations, and 45 Fellows newly elected: the current total is 3,080 Fellows.

32/21 AOB

- i) The President announced a plan to rationalise Council agendas by dealing with all the oversight of Society business via the quarterly operational plan. In future, starred items will be automatically approved unless anyone raises any issues by 24 hours ahead of Council meeting.

- ii) The President reported that as the Gen. Sec. will be retiring in April 2022 at the Anniversary Meeting, recruitment needs to start for a replacement. A recruitment panel headed by the President, with someone external and with the HoL&MC as Secretary will be formed, and will look for suitable head-hunters. The Gen. Sec. will update the Job Description and circulate to Council for approval.
- iii) The President thanked all staff who are keeping Society business going under difficult circumstances.
- iv) The President then asked all staff except the Gen. Sec. to leave the meeting.
- v) Post-meeting note: Council has recently reviewed the General Secretary's current salary and agreed an uplift backdated to 1 April 2021.

Date of next meeting: Thursday 21 October 2021 at 11.30 am