

The Minutes of the Board of Trustees Meeting of the Horniman Public Museum and Public Park Trust, held on 24 July 2025

Hybrid Meeting - via Microsoft Teams and in the Museum Meeting Room, Horniman Museum and Gardens, 100 London Road, SE23 3PQ.

PRESENT	
Michael Salter-Church (MSC) - Chair	Somi Umolu (SU) - Vice-Chair
Diana Maine (DM)	Patrick Barker (PB)
Edmund Neuberger (EN)	Rod Taylor (RT)
Naila Yousuf (NY)	Roma Dibua (RD)
Nicholas Wyver (NW)	Simon Hesketh (SH)

IN ATTENDANCE	
Gordon Seabright (GS) – Chief Executive	
Michelle Edward (MED) – Director of Finance & Corporate Services	
Annie Duffield (AD) – Director of Audiences & Income	
Kirsten Walker (KW) – Director of Collections Care and Estates	
Peronel Craddock (PC) – Director of Content	
Nicola Mclean (NM) – Board Apprentice	

APOLOGIES	
Apologies were received from Eva Appelbaum (EA) and Mayowa Ochere (MO)	

Agenda #:	GOVERNANCE
1.1	<p>Apologies and declaration of conflicts of interest Apologies were received from Eva Appelbaum and Mayowa Ochere. No new conflicts of interests were declared.</p>
1.2	<p>Draft Minutes of the meeting held on 24 April 2025 The minutes of this meeting were circulated, and the contents noted. The minutes were approved as a true record of that meeting.</p>
1.3	<p>Matters arising from the Minutes The Action Planner has been circulated and the contents noted.</p>
1.3.1	<p>Key updates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wood Vale residents' licences – A copy of one of the letters sent to Trustees signed by a group of residents was added to the Board papers. One resident has not responded, and the house appears empty, as no mail has been picked up in a long while. Two residents have proposed buying the land. Each resident recently received a letter from Bates Wells urging them to engage constructively for an amicable solution. Various approaches and potential outcomes were discussed further. GS to follow up with MSC and EN on next steps. A due diligence process to assess suitability of new funders was added to the Board papers. AD talked through the report and explained the escalation processes. A fundraising strategy will be presented to Trustees in due course.

1.3.2	All other action points have been completed or are due for completion by the next Board meeting.
Agenda #:	FOR DISCUSSION
2.1	Management Report – Q1, Apr to Jun 2025
2.1.1	The CEO: GS presented the Q1 Management Report for April to June 2025.
2.1.2	Redacted
2.1.3	GS reported that the recent SMT team day included a facilitated session on the Horniman's Values, which need to be refreshed and integrated into everyone's work. A follow up session will be held with Section Leads to inform this element of the Corporate Plan, which will come to Trustees later in the year.
2.1.4	GS explained that sponsorship was secured for a small exhibition of Crimean Tatar art that will be run in Gallery Square between October 2025 and February 2026. A further funding bid will, if successful, enable bringing the artists over from Kyiv for a launch event. GS noted that this will support the work that is being done on twinning with a Ukrainian museum.
2.1.5	GS wanted to reassure the Board that they were on track with the spend on the SCC lift project, and also on track with the public sector decarbonisation scheme work. The National Audit Office will be carrying out a value for money review of the financial resilience of DCMS museums and galleries. A survey will therefore, soon need to be completed.
2.1.6	Redacted
2.1.7	GS explained that the annual VisitEngland assessment was recently carried out. Although the report has not yet been published, he was made aware of the contents. The cafe rating was poor in the previous report, but the range, quality and service in the cafe has since improved. The overall attraction scored highest at 96%, with Retail at 95% and an overall score of 90% compared to last year's 88%. Which qualifies us for the VisitEngland Gold Award.
2.1.8	Further discussions ensued about the museum's performance in relation to visitor numbers against target and possible pricing options to attract more visitors.
2.2	Nature + Love Project Status update
2.2.1	The Director of Collections Care and Estates: KW presented the N+L project status. She stated that 75% of the gallery roof has now been stripped. The roof appears to be in better condition than expected. Rooff's site manager recently described the Horniman as their best clients ever. KW stated that they're one of the best contractors that she has had to deal with.
2.2.2	KW explained that a letter was sent to both Blakedown and Rooff regarding notice of delays. Rooff has not yet responded. Blakedown are more delayed than Rooff and sent a letter with their reasons for the delay. They have not, however, sent a Gantt chart, so this has been requested from them for review. If the fault for the delay lies with the Horniman there are no penalties to Blakedown. However, if the delay is Blakedown's fault then the Horniman could claim liquidated damages from them. MED took the action to do an updated financial health check on Blakedown.
2.2.3	KS stated that the cafe kitchen tender has just recently gone out. Another thing to note was that the Natural History Gallery has a flat roof in places, and it is quite damaged. Some of it was caused by the scaffolders, but the roof was already damaged before the scaffolding. The main option is to put a new roof on top of the existing one, so an assessment is being done to establish if the structure can support the weight.
2.2.4	There's just over £600K left of contingency, and the quantity surveyors propose that it is reduced by 5% each month until it gets to £500K. However, KW stated that we

	are reluctant to do this until we can be more certain about potential costs due to the condition of the roof. Additional costs relating to delays may also need to be provided for. SH added that in terms of governance of the project, weekly meetings are held with Focus, and regular Capital Project Board meetings are held to review projects in more detail to assess risks and avoid nasty surprises.
2.3	Martyn's Law brief update
2.3.1	The CEO: GS made Trustees aware that he has become the Compliance Lead. Full implementation isn't due until April 2027, but the aim is to be prepared and to be fulfilling all the conditions of Martyn's Law well in advance of that.
2.3.2 2.3.3 2.3.4 2.3.5	Redacted
2.4	Final DCMS Framework Document 2025-2028
2.4.1	The Director of Finance and Corporate Services: MED presented the DCMS Framework document for the Board to review. MED highlighted the key changes displayed in Red in the 'Comply or explain table' section of the report.
2.4.2	One of the changes required, which MED consulted with the Chair of the A&R Committee on, was the requirement for the Horniman to consult with The National Audit Office (NAO) when next going for an external audit tender. The NAO should be offered the opportunity to audit the Horniman's accounts, and only if the NAO decline should the Horniman put it out to tender.
2.4.3	The external audit contract should have been up for tender in November 2025. However, given that MED has just gone through her first HMG group audit and the Audit Partner at MKS is still fairly new, approval was received from the A&R Committee to extend MKS's services for another year. The external audit changes therefore will not come into play until next year: November 2026.
2.4.4	The Board of Trustees confirmed their approval for the CEO to sign the updated DCMS Framework Document for 2025-2028.

Agenda #:	FOR DECISION
3.1	Staff Monitoring Statistics, Financial impact of Benchmarking and 2025 Pay Offer Redacted
3.2	HMG Consolidated Annual Report and Financial Statements for year-ended 31 March 2025
3.2.1	The Director of Finance and Corporate Services: MED presented the HMG Consolidated Annual Report and Financial Statements. MED made the Board aware that the external auditors confirmed that the accounts were consistent with the previous year without any major issues.
3.2.2	The annual report had been reviewed in more detail at the Audit & Risk Committee meeting with both the internal and external auditors in attendance. Both auditors had presented their annual reports, and the external auditors confirmed that they were happy with the audit process and their findings. Some minor amendments to the annual report were recommended during the meeting, and the only key area that required changes to the narrative was the Governance Statement, in light of the unsatisfactory internal audit rating relation to Data Protection.
3.2.3	MED stated that DCMS was also provided with a copy of the draft Annual Report and had requested that further details were added to the Governance Statement, relating to how the Board adheres to the risk management principles and practices,

	including the five principles defined in the Orange book. The only thing that the external auditors were still waiting for was third party verification from CCLA on the closing bank balances.
3.2.4	The Board of Trustees confirmed their approval of the HMG Annual Report and Consolidated Financial Statements to 31 March 2025 by a show of hands.
3.3	Health & Safety Annual Report and quarterly update
3.3.1	The Director of Collections Care and Estates: KW, presented the Health & Safety Annual Report and quarterly update.

Agenda #:	FOR INFORMATION
4.1	Information Technology 'Switch Project' – Presentation by Head of IT: Thomas Dakin
4.1.1	Thomas Dakin (TD); Head of Information Technology joined the meeting via Teams to present the Switch Project that he and his IT team are working on. TD stated that the project involves updating the outdated network cabling and cabinets around the museum, then switching to a more powerful and secure Wi-Fi network.
4.1.2	TD explained that the modern and more secure network would enable further digital development of an app and tools through QR codes. He also shared innovative concepts and ideas on how the new technology could enhance visitors' experience and revolutionize the way visitors and staff interact with each other. After taking several questions, the Board thanked TD for his presentation and work on the Switch project.
4.2	HM&G Group Financial Report - Q1 to 30 June 2025
4.2.1	The Director of Finance and Corporate Services: MED presented the June 2025 YTD financial results. MED made the Board aware that the new finance system; Xero, was successfully designed, tested and implemented at the end of April in parallel to the 2024/25 year-end audit.
4.2.2	MED explained that the Q1 accounts to June 2025 were being rolled out to the budget holders, which compares actual financial results to budget by department. Budget holders will also be required to update their department forecasts.
4.2.3	Redacted
4.3	Horniman Museum Enterprise (HME) Trading Report, presented at HME Board Meeting held on 21 July 2025
4.3.1	The CEO and Chair of HME: GS presented the Horniman Museum Enterprise (HME) Trading report. GS first thanked DM for joining the HME Board. GS then spoke about how the performance in retail has improved, and that a lot of effort was made to clear old stock, which has an impact on gross profit margin.
4.3.2	Price reductions will no longer be constant as slow moving stock will not be on permanent display. There will be occasional spot sales to clear stock, and the plan is to move more towards having more seasonal and bespoke merchandise. The cafe KPIs have been revised and agreed with Colicci. Both the service and menu in the café have improved. There was a 22% increase in revenue, which is still below target due to the reduced number of visitors.
4.3.3	Venue hire has been affected by the Nature + Love works but is broadly on track and in line with expectation. Outdoor live music will be launched with a single jazz concert this summer, to test viability and practicality. Ticket sales at the time of this meeting looked promising, as a quarter of them had already been sold and we were already almost at break-even.
4.4	Audit & Risk Committee update and Minutes for meeting held on 3 July 2025

4.4.1	The Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee: RD presented the minutes of the last meeting. RD explained that both the internal auditors: BDO and external auditors: MKS attended the meeting to present their various reports.
4.4.2	Redacted
4.4.3	
4.5	Capital Projects Board Minutes for the meeting held on 18 June 2025
4.5.1	The Chair of the Capital Projects Board: SH presented the Minutes of the last meeting. SH stated that most of what is included in the Minutes has been superseded by events discussed in today's meeting.
4.5.2	MSC noted that the Nature + Love project status report presented as part of the N+L update contained 74 pages. He stated that as the Capital Projects Board review things in detail there is no need for Trustees to be provided with such a detailed report. SH took it as an action, to review and choose which slides should be presented to Trustees in future meetings.
4.6	Corporate Risk Register highlights – July 2025 Redacted
4.7	Annual Visitors Report
4.7.1	The Director of Audiences & Income: AD presented the Annual Visitors Report. AD explained that the Horniman uses an external agency called DJS Research. As part of the Magic Consortium of museums, the cost of that procurement is split across several of the larger museums. Surveys are done on a monthly basis.
4.7.2	AD stated that her team reviews the details monthly and then shares the results with the Audience Champions Group. She then receives an annual report which benchmarks the Horniman against other museums and galleries, and the report also includes comparisons against last year.
4.8	EDI Policy
4.8.1	The Director of Collections Care and Estates: KW presented the new policy that was developed by the EDI group. KW stated that the group had done a great job in developing the new policy.

Agenda #:	ANY OTHER BUSINESS
5.	No other business was raised.

Agenda #:	CLOSED SESSION
6.	Trustees had a closed session – content provided by the Chair.

MEETING CLOSED