

Horniman Public Museum & Public Park Trust
100 London Road, Forest Hill, London, SE23 3PQ
Charity Registration: 802725



Meeting: Board of Trustees Meeting, Horniman Public Museum & Park Trust
Date: Thursday 22 January 2026
Time: 2.40pm
Venue: 100 London Road, Forest Hill, London and MS Teams

Status	Name	Role	Initials
Present	Michael Salter-Church	Trustee & Chair	MSC
	Diana Maine	Trustee	DM
	Eva Appelbaum	Trustee	EA
	Mayowa Ochere	Trustee	MO
	Rod Taylor	Trustee	RT
	Roma Dibua	Trustee	RD
	Simon Hesketh	Trustee	SH
	Naila Yousuf	Trustee	NY
	Edmund Neuberger	Trustee	EN
	Patrick Barker	Trustee	PB
	Nicholas Wyver	Trustee	NW
	Somi Umolu	Trustee & Vice Chair	SU
	Nicola McLean	Boardroom apprentice	NM
In attendance	Gordon Seabright	Chief Executive Officer	GS
	Annie Duffield	Director, Audience & Income	AD
	Kirsten Walker	Director, Collections Care & Estate	KW
	Peronel Craddock	Director, Content	PC
	Sharon Vickery	Minute taker	SV
Apologies	None		

Agenda

1. Welcome, Apologies and Declaration of conflicts of interest

MSC welcomed everyone to the meeting; no apologies were received.

No new conflicts of interest were declared.

MSC highlighted a letter from the Permanent Secretary at DCMS setting out matters the Secretary of State is interested in, ranging from loans to other museums around the UK to supporting children in care and care leavers. He has asked GS and the SMT to consider these matters and how to report against them to DCMS.

2. Previous minutes and Actions

It was acknowledged that several actions were noted at the last meeting, but due to the pressures on the SMT at present, these would not all be addressed in this meeting.

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 16 October 2025 were agreed by all present.

The minutes of the AGM held on the 16 of October 2025 were agreed by all present.

3. Matters Arising

MSC proposed that the Chair of the Remuneration Committee (RemCo) would be chosen from amongst RemCo members at the next meeting. The proposal was unanimously agreed.

The reappointment of Trustees Roma Dibua and Eva Appelbaum was also agreed along with the extension of Simon Hesketh for a further year to provide continuity chairing the Capital Projects committee through to the completion of Nature + Love.

4. Management Report Oct - Dec 2025

For discussion.

GS highlighted key points from the management report. The 'Voyage to the Deep' exhibit is being installed, with an opening date set for 13 February 2026.

The DCMS announced late on 21 January that £1.5 billion would be allocated to the cultural sector, of which £600 million would be allocated to national museums. No further information is available at present.

Match funding for the Net Zero project is still required and is included in the forward plan. Updates will be made through the Capital Projects Board.

GS updated the board that PB has attended a staff briefing, and the invitation is open to all trustees.

Single points of failure have been identified across several critical systems, with limited access and knowledge held by individuals. This presents a material operational risk.

Redacted

Redacted

Redacted

Despite the issues, visitor numbers increased by 1% over Christmas and trading income was up 40% compared to the previous December.

Finally, a potential new Head of Estates has been identified.

The trustees thanked the SMT for all their hard work, acknowledged the pressures they are under, and extended their support.

5. Nature + Love Project

For discussion.

The Board received a brief update on this project, confirming that the poplar trees had been felled on the recommendation to do so. Some complaints have been received from neighbours, as it had been confirmed at residents' meetings that this would not happen. Advice has been sought on which species would be suitable replacements, and this advice has been communicated to stakeholders.

KW confirmed that, following the action from the last meeting, although there have been some additional cost due to contractor delays, meetings with Focus (project managers) continue in order to minimise this. The work is kept under constant review.

6. Report on the Board's recommendations to the SMT:

For decision and approval

- Employees' Code of Conduct
- Trustees' Code of Conduct
- Corporate Governance Code (inc. Delegated Authorities)
- Whistleblowing Policy

Redacted

GS also gave a line-by-line update on the Board's recommendations, noting progress including over 90% completion of sexual harassment awareness training.

The whistleblowing policy and new performance review forms have now been agreed with the trade union, pending Board approval.

New policies will be incorporated into a revised staff handbook with version control, replacing the current handbook.

Given time constraints, it was proposed that any comments on the circulated papers be submitted outside the meeting, with formal approval recorded at the next meeting if agreed in the interim.

GS confirmed, for the record, that the organisation will adopt Bates Wells' Serious Incident reporting to the Charity Commission process until the organisation's own policy is ratified at the next meeting. This is partly in response to the Museum's recent brief closure due to the water being unexpectedly shut off by Thames Water (which appears to have been a mistake by them)

Agreement: *The Board approved the above-named policies for formal adoption with any minor wording refinements to be agreed outside the meeting with GS.*

7. Forward Plan 2026-2029

For decision and approval

GS presented the rolling three-year forward plan. The plan places greater emphasis on organisational values and reflects the Horniman as a values-driven organisation. GS also recommended bringing forward the development of the next ten-year framework plan to this year, in recognition of a changing external environment. The Board traditionally adopts the forward plan at this meeting.

It was confirmed that the values were developed through staff engagement and leadership workshops. Performance review forms have been revised to assess behaviours as well as outputs, and training will be provided to support their use. Further training needs for section leads are being assessed, including practical management skills and embedding the values in day-to-day work.

Trustees noted that while the values clearly describe interpersonal behaviours, they do not explicitly address performance-driven or decision-making behaviours. It was confirmed that performance expectations are addressed through organisational priorities and the

performance review process. It was agreed that minor refinements could be explored outside the meeting without reopening the full staff consultation process.

The importance of translating values into practical behaviours through scenario-based training was emphasised. GS confirmed that the values will remain a live document and will be embedded in staff communications and training.

Agreement: *The Board agreed to adopt the forward plan in principle, with any minor wording refinements to be considered outside the meeting and final approval recorded at the next meeting.*

8. 2026/27 Group Budgets in draft

For discussion

GS provided an update on the 2026/27 budget. Initial budget submissions from section leads have been received and reviewed at SMT with external support. Further work is required to achieve a balanced position, particularly given a flat financial settlement for the coming year, which will result in a real-terms reduction. A dedicated SMT team day is scheduled for 2 February to work on the budget.

As the new financial year begins before the next Board meeting, it was proposed that the draft budget be circulated between meetings for approval. Trustees requested clarity on the financial guardrails for budget development, including expectations for break-even, surplus, or deficit positions. GS confirmed an assumption of an at minimum break-even budget.

It was agreed that a dedicated Trustee session should be arranged before the next formal Board meeting to review the draft budget and provide assurance before formal approval.

Agreement: *SMT will finalise the draft budget and circulate it to Trustees for review, with a dedicated meeting to be arranged. A break-even position was set as the expectation by Trustees.*

9. Report on the Pay Award

For information

GS reported on the completion of pay negotiations. A 3.8% pay award was agreed.

Redacted

Redacted

GS requested that the Remuneration Committee meet early, once the budget is confirmed, to set parameters for the next pay negotiations, noting that the pay year begins on 1 July and that delayed negotiations this year had created challenges. It was confirmed that DCMS pay guidance will be required before negotiations can formally commence, and that any variation from DCMS expectations must be justified by the Accounting Officer.

Trustees recognised the importance of fair pay alongside wider staff support and wellbeing.

Agreement: *The Remuneration Committee will be asked to meet early, following budget confirmation and receipt of DCMS guidance, to set the negotiation parameters for the next pay round.*

PB left the meeting.

10. December 2025 Financial Results and Forecast in draft

For information.

Redacted

11. Health & Safety Quarterly Report

For information.

KW confirmed that refresher training in mental health first aid will be provided and that more mental health first aiders are being recruited.

12. HME Trading Report

For information

GS reported strong trading performance, particularly in December, with retail and food and beverage income both up by approximately 40%. Key drivers included the successful launch of the Creative Creatures soft-play attraction, which increased family visitation on traditionally quieter days, and a more professional retail operation with improved stock management and a stronger customer offer.

Venue hire income remains challenging due to ongoing building works. However, the Board agreed the key assumptions for next year's venue hire budget, with further work required to translate them into a full budget, including resolving cross-charging arrangements.

The strategy for the new cafe was discussed, including how it would differentiate from the existing cafe and the opportunities presented by increased family footfall. Christmas retail performance and shop presentation were positively noted.

It was confirmed that progress in growing self-generated income has been highlighted to DCMS.

13. Audit & Risk Committee Update

For information

The Audit and Risk Committee received internal audit reports on the project and the cafe. The cafe audit reported no major findings and provided moderate assurance on the effectiveness of processes and controls.

The project audit identified two high-priority issues relating to contractor payments and controls over project scope changes. Recommendations are being implemented. Limited assurance was provided on process design and moderate assurance on effectiveness. It was confirmed that issues relating to contractor payments are close to resolution.

14. Corporate Risk Register

For information.

The Board considered the Corporate Risk Register. It was noted that further work will be undertaken to refine the register into a more strategic format and to strengthen mitigation statements, as highlighted at previous meetings. It was acknowledged that a specific risk relating to key-person dependency is not currently included and will be considered by the Audit and Risk Committee at its next meeting.

Trustees discussed emerging external risks, including reliance on overseas technology providers for cloud and IT services and the potential vulnerability this creates. It was agreed that this is a sector-wide issue and will be monitored.

A query was raised about the applicability of the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act. It was agreed that this will be reviewed to confirm whether any additional compliance actions are required.

15. Capital Projects Board Minutes

For information

The Capital Projects Board report was noted as straightforward, with no significant concerns raised. It was confirmed that, while some programme risk remains, no material knock-on impacts on planned projects or the 125th celebrations are anticipated, aside from potential weather-related delays.

16. AOB

MSC informed the board that he is leaving Openreach at the end of March.

MSC advised that the board appraisals are due and he will circulate a questionnaire to each trustee for completion. SU has agreed to lead an informal appraisal of MSC to complement that done by DCMS

MSC and the board thanked NM for her service as a board apprentice given this was her last meeting.

17. Date of next meeting(s)

Board meetings are scheduled for 22 April, 30 July and 5 November (the latter is expected to be a full day meeting). Hybrid options to be agreed. The first 2027 meeting is on 28 January.

HM Enterprises Board meetings are scheduled for 13 April, 20 July, 19 October and then 18 January next year.

Capital Projects Board meetings are scheduled for 19 March, 18 June, 24 September and 17 December.

Audit and Risk Committee meetings are scheduled for 19 March and 2 July, with one more to be scheduled in November.

RemCo dates are to be set, the first is expected in late April to prepare for the annual pay award which is from 1 July.

Restitution, Repatriation and Rematriation Subcommittee meetings will be scheduled as required.

Meeting closed.

Action Table

Ref	Action	Target date	Date closed	Update	Owner
8.1	SMT to finalise draft 2026/27 budget, circulate to trustees with a session to be held for review and agreement				GS & MSC
9.1	Remco to meet in advance of 1 July to agree (i) Chair (ii) pay parameters	1 July			MSC
14.1	Add key person dependency risk to the risk register for review at the A&R Committee				GS
14.2	Review the Economic Crime & Corporate Transparency Act for applicability to the organisation				GS