

Board of Directors of the Trustee Company

Summary of Meeting held on 30 June and 15 July 2022

The Board met on 30 June between 7.15pm and 9.30pm. The following Directors were in attendance: Professor Ian Gadd (Chair), Mr Michael Davis (Vice-Chair), Mr Dick Bateman, Mr Stephen Bird, Professor Jon Dawes, Mr Chris Garcia, Professor Barry Gilbertson, Mr Joe Houlihan, Mr Rob Randall, Dr Joe Willson.

The meeting was then adjourned and reconvened on 15 July between 2pm and 3.30pm. The following Directors were in attendance: Professor Ian Gadd (Chair), Mr Dick Bateman, Mr Stephen Bird, Professor Jon Dawes, Mr Chris Garcia, Professor Barry Gilbertson, Dr Bharat Pankhania, Dr Joe Willson.

The following is a summary of the Board's discussions, actions, and decisions; it is not necessarily presented in the precise order in which items were discussed and excludes confidential and commercially sensitive matters.

BRLSI involvement in a research funding application called 'Many Minds'

This project, led by the University of Exeter with support from the University of Sheffield and King's College London) aims to explore the intellectual history and legacy of Literary and Philosophical Societies/Literary and Scientific Institutions by focusing on the history of the BRLSI and the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society. The project team intends to apply to the Arts and Humanities Research Council in the coming weeks and, if successful, the project would begin in April 2023. BRLSI has been in discussion with the University of Exeter about this project for many months, and it has been discussed at previous Board meetings.

At this meeting, the Chair reported that, following approval of the Directors on its wording, a letter of support had been submitted to the research team at the University of Exeter for inclusion in the application.

Victor Suchar Christmas Lecture

The Chair confirmed Dr Tristram Hunt, Director of the Victoria and Albert Museum will deliver the Victor Suchar Christmas Lecture scheduled for 19th December 2022 at 7.30pm.

Visitors to BRLSI

The Chair reported that there had been over 12,000 visitors to Queen Square since 1 January. This comprises: ticket sales, Bath Festival attendees, external events, Saturday coffee morning attendees, and exhibition attendees.

Partnership with Bath Festivals

Ian Stockley, Chief Executive of Bath Festivals, was in attendance for this item, and reported on how successful and positive the experience of working with BRLSI as a new Festival venue had been; he particularly commended the team of staff and volunteers for their hard work, enthusiasm, and friendliness

BRLSI was scheduled to host 22 events over six days: one event was cancelled due to ill health and a couple were relocated due to lower than expected ticket sales. BRLSI was also actively involved in the children's activities over the first weekend. There were 1160 visitors, many of whom reported that this was their first time in the building; this included lots of families. We received a share of ticket sales (approximately £1800).

There will be a formal review meeting between Bath Festivals and BRLSI later in July to discuss how the experience might be improved for next year; it was also noted that BRLSI will be involved in hosting some events for the Children's Literature Festival in the autumn.

The Board formally commended the following 14 members of staff and volunteers for their contribution to making the Festival week a success: Gerie Herbert (staff), Paul Browne (staff), Elham Jones-Redman (staff), Matt Little (staff), Anne Forrest (volunteer), Mary Burton (volunteer), Rachel Small (volunteer), Fran Pinheiro (volunteer), Kate Curran (volunteer), Jude Harris (volunteer), Cathy Whiley (volunteer), Nicola Carroll (volunteer), Lyn Barham (volunteer), Betty Suchar (volunteer), Paula Riseborough (volunteer), Sue Boyle (volunteer), and Penelope Law (volunteer). In particular, Gerie Herbert and Jude Harris were singled out for their dedication throughout the whole eight days of the Festival.

Audit of 2021/22 Accounts

Joe Scaife, a partner at Bishop Fleming accountants, was in attendance for this item. He noted that the audit was clean with no adjustments nor observations to be included in their audit report. The Board expressed its appreciation to Joe Willson, as Chair of the Finance subcommittee and Clare Whereat, the Institution's bookkeeper for providing such an accurate set of accounts to the accountants. The Board unanimously approved the Accounts of the charity 2021/22, the Accounts for the Trustees company 2021/22 and the letter of representation from the Board and authorised Joe Willson to sign the accounts on behalf of the Board.

The 2021/22 accounts will be circulated to the membership ahead of the Annual General Meeting in October.

Departing members of the Board

The two appointed Directors from the University of Bath, Professor Jonathan Dawes and Dr Daniela De Angeli, will be stepping down as Directors from 31 July 2022. Jonathan was appointed on 29 November 2012 and attended his first meeting in February 2013, and Daniela was appointed on 21st July 2020 and attended her first meeting in September 2020. The Board expressed their gratitude to both for their service to the Board and their contributions to the Institution's wider activities: Jonathan has been a long-time member of the Finance sub-Committee and for several years oversaw the Institution's annual audit, while Daniela has been actively engaged with the Institution's digital activities.

The Chair has been liaising with the University of Bath about new Directors, and have been advised that two individuals have been selected and formal approval from the University Senate is pending. They will be appointed as Directors from 1 August 2022 and will serve an initial term of 3 years.

New Elected Directors

Nominations were received from Mary Burton and Chris Garcia. As there are two vacancies, no election will be required and the hustings scheduled for 21 September has been cancelled. The Chair will circulate the news to members.

Sharing summaries of Board meetings

The Board agreed that, in the interests of openness and accountability, summaries of the Board's actions (excluding confidential items) would be shared initially with the Management Committee and subcommittees and subsequently published on the website.

Collections

The Board received a quarterly report from the Collections Manager, Matt Williams, and discussed the need to balance the promotion of the collections to as wide an audience as possible while ensuring that the specialist aspects of the collections were also highlighted and communicated. They reviewed and approved a loan request from Bath Abbey.

Membership

The Board formally approved a list of new members. Membership currently stands at 715.

Coronavirus Response Team (CORT)

The Board noted that David Haywood had stepped down as Chair of CORT and formally thanked him for his important work in this role.

Finance Sub-Committee and Management Committees minutes

The minutes of recent meetings of both these committees were received.

Publications Subcommittee

The Board noted that the Chair of the Publications Subcommittee, Julian Vincent, had stepped down. The Board expressed its formal appreciation for his long service to the Institution, including as Chair of the Board. The Management Committee are exploring options in seeking a replacement and how best to support BRLSI's publications activities and plans in the future.

Management Committee

The Board noted that the Chair of the Management Committee, Julie Cole, had stepped down but will continue as an Elected Director. The Chair noted how transformative Julie's work as Chair has been for BRLSI's operational activity, and the key role she has played in the strategic progress the Institution has been able to make over the last nine months. The Board formally expressed its thanks to her for her work as Chair of the Management Committee.

The Directors will now begin the process of identifying a new Chair for the Management Committee. In the meantime, they agreed that Andreas Wasmuht and Chris Garcia would act as co-chairs, with Andreas concentrating on Management Committee issues and Chris as an elected Director, representing the Management Committee at the Board.

Ian Gadd, Chair of the Board