UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

ZOOLOGY MUSEUM RECOGNITION FUND PROJECT BOARD

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 18 JANUARY 2013

Present: Neil Curtis (Convener), Jenny Downes, Martyn Gorman, Duncan Heddle, George Johnson, Melia Knecht, Alan Knox, Mark Paterson, Jonathan Pettitt, Carrie Watt

Apologies for absence were received from Leigh Bjorkvoll, David Burslem, Marie Fish, Les Noble, Anna Shortland, Nicole Stahl.

1. MINUTES
The minutes of Project Board meeting of 23 November 2012 were approved, subject to the inclusion of the Cromarty Lighthouse in the list of current research opportunities.

2. MATTERS ARISING
1 - It was noted that while the scope of the funded project was restricted, it had already inspired further work, notably the redecoration being carried out by Estates.

3. COLLECTIONS STORAGE
In addition to the Recognition Capital Fund work, other University Museums resources were being diverted to enable improvements in collections storage, including visible storage in lower gallery foyer (which would require lower light levels) and new shelving in room B50 and in the egg and insect room. The importance of ensuring quality storage equipment was highlighted.

4. MAIN GALLERY EXHIBIT
Redecoration work is following a colour scheme of dark green, cream and white, with a mottled brown carpet. Completion is estimated by the end of February. A provisional plan for a new case layout in the lower gallery has been created, including a new display of evolution and taxonomy, followed by a focus on primate and human evolution. It was agreed that this would make clear that humanity is not the pinnacle of evolution. It was also agreed that some seating and tables should be available. The rearrangement would include moving the tunicata case to a more appropriate location at the museum office door.
ACTION – Investigate Estates and safety issues caused by blocking the office door.

As experience at King’s Museum has shown that objects on open storage in drawers are vulnerable to damage, the introductory display would include lockable drawers for teaching material (such as fish skulls), with keys available to Honorary Curatorial Fellows. Colour coding would be used to link the introductory case to the taxonomic displays elsewhere in the museum.

Martyn Gorman notes that some of the skeletons in the gallery may contain arsenic.
ACTION – Investigate heavy metal contamination of specimens.

5. FOYER EXHIBIT
A draft layout was shown for the ‘Aberdeen Naturalists’ display foyer area using existing cases and a joinery partition. It was suggested that cut-outs in the partition might make it less dominant. The displays would focus on historical collecting, current research and opportunities to become involved. Suggested collectors to highlight include:
• Sir John Struthers (whale bones/ crocodile/ case showing comparative anatomy)
• John James Audubon and William MacGillivray (plaque, reproductions of ‘Birds of America’)
• J. W. T. Trail (herbarium specimens/insects/ethnographic objects)
• V. C. Wynne-Edwards (bird skins/ material related to Arctic exploration)

ACTION – Martyn Gorman to provide information on Struthers, Duncan Heddle to provide information about MacGillivray, Wynne-Edwards, possibly Trail

Other suggestions included Alister Hardy, Regius Chair of Natural History and material relating to the history of the museum, Bob Kabata, a Polish scholar who, worked on parasitic copepods, and more emphasis on current and recent research. It was suggested that the ‘Current research’ and ‘How to get involved’ sections should be located nearer to the garden/lecture theatre and include information about birds and plants to see in the botanic garden.

Proposals were received from David Lusseau (Senior Lecturer in Marine Biology) for a dolphin web-cam in partnership with SNH and the Harbour Board, and from Mark Paterson for links to web-cams in bird boxes in the botanic garden. It was agreed that these should be considered in a subsequent museum development project.

6. COMPUTERS IN THE ZOOLOGY MUSEUM
A range of comments had been received from Biological Sciences staff about the use of computers in the museum. While some noted the attractiveness of the museum as a computer classroom, it was noted that very few staff were advocating their retention. It was also noted that a lot of food material had been found behind the computer desks— including beer bottle caps and a chicken leg – and that most of the glass panels had been broken and required replacing. It was agreed that as many computers as possible should be removed from the museum.

ACTION – Neil Curtis to discuss computers in the museum with Liz Baggs, Head of School.

7. WORK PLAN
To take account of the additional Estates work, Museums Galleries Scotland have agreed to extend the project end deadline from end July to end September 2013. A revised work plan was circulated.

It was noted that all expenditure to date has been from the Estates budget (painting/re-carpeting) and the museum operating budget, not yet from the project budget.

8. VISIT TO THE MUSEUM
The meeting closed with a visit to the museum to inspect redecoration and discuss the proposed layout.

9. DATES OF MEETINGS
It was noted that the next meetings were scheduled for:

• Tuesday, 12 February 2013 at 2pm Zoology Building room 316
• Thursday, 21 March 2013 at 2pm Zoology Building room B19
• Tuesday, 23 April 2013 at 3pm Zoology Building room 316