

**At Glasgow and via MS Teams of the
Royal Conservatoire of Scotland on
Friday 28 January 2022 at 10:00am
being a meeting of the Board of
Governors**

PRESENT

Dr Jo Buckley (JB)	Prof Dorothy Miell (DXM), Vice-Chair
Andrew Butcher (AB)	Ed Monaghan (EM)
Morag Campbell (MC)	Prof Mark O'Thomas (MOT)
John Craig (JC) (SUP)	Nacim Pak-Shiraz (NCP)
Prof Stuart Cross (SC)	Agnes Robson (AR) SIG, Vice-Chair
Ken Fairbrother (KF) (SU VPM)	Philip Rodney (PR)
Dr Lois Fitch (LF) (Dep Principal)	Prof Matthew Rooke (MR)
Dr David Hare (DH)	Caroline Roxburgh (CR)
Elizabeth Jenkinson (EJ)	Jean Sangster (JS)
Carol Main (CM)	Prof Jeffrey Sharkey (PJS) (Principal)
Sharon Mair (SM)	Dr John Taylor (JT)
Ruth McGowan (RM)	

IN ATTENDANCE

Stephen Broad (SB)	(Director RKE)
Gemma Bodinetz(GB)	(Director of DDPF)
Lydia Demaison (LD)	(Director of Human Resources)
Prof Vicky Gunn (VG)	(Academic Registrar and Board Secretary)
Janette Harkess(JXH)	(Director of External Relations)
Helen McVey (HM)	(Director of Business Development)
Gordon Munro GM)	(Director of Music)
Alan Smith (AS)	(Director of Finance and Estates)
Christopher Wynn (CW)	(Strategic Director of Principal Gifts)

IN THE CHAIR

Nick Kuenssberg (NK) (Chair)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

NK welcomed GB (the new Director of DDPF) to her first BOG meeting.

He also noted that Christopher Wynn (the new was in attendance as an observer as part of his induction into the RCS.

JS's renomination as the Academic Board representative governor was also noted and appreciated.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest at the outset of the meeting.

However, in discussion of item 10.iii the Board were asked to note NK's declaration of interest in Frog Systems Limited, a company that operates in the health and wellbeing referral space.

3. CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTE OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS HELD ON 8 DECEMBER 2021

The minutes of the previous meeting **were approved** as an accurate record. All actions agreed at the last meeting had been actioned or were in hand and it was reported that good progress with the strategy plan 2023-30 was being made.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTE NOT ELSEWHERE ON THE AGENDA

There were no specific matters arising not elsewhere on the agenda. NK acknowledged the ongoing work on strategy as identified in the minute of the meeting of 8.12.21 and continuing currently through CSMT and their reports.

5. REPORT FROM THE PRINCIPAL

The Principal's report was received and noted.

JS drew particular attention to:

- a. The changing circumstances regarding current guidance on COVID restrictions which were enabling RCS to revive on site, in person activity and have external audiences;
- b. The excitement and possibilities being afforded by RCS's 175th anniversary (since foundation), including the creative activity being led by Sam McShane with student engagement which would culminate with the premiering of a production in December 2022;
- c. The concerns being expressed by the whole Scottish higher education sector with respect to Scottish Government (SG) current levels of engagement with it.
- d. Several key challenges for RCS were identified:
 - i. The necessity of conveying and restating firmly the socioeconomic significance of the performing arts in general and its higher education provision specifically in terms of COVID recovery conversations with the Scottish Government.
 - ii. The need to ensure that the negative impact of Brexit on the Conservatoire's student body was not forgotten by funders.
 - iii. Of note was an apparent lack of integration between areas of SG government post-COVID strategic development (i.e. business innovation), the arms' length agencies engaged by the government in this work (such as Scottish Enterprise and Scottish Skills Development), and the importance of 'creative cities' in both supporting and generating the development of such businesses.
 - iv. Within this discussion, concern was also expressed by the SIG that there was an a disconnect between the maintenance of Transitions funding by the SFC and the impressive work undertaken by RCS's Transitions team.
 - v. Balancing the financial dependence on SFC funded Scottish domiciled student places with a broader financial base for the RCS. The need to leverage Scottish funds for the Scottish context at same time as expanding the range of funding to maintain an invigorated offer as a global and a national player was recognised.

Following the Principal's introduction, the Board turned its attention to the work of the Deputy Principal, particularly the Outcome Agreement and self-evaluation. NK identified this as a critical paper within the papers, one which captured the value of the work undertaken by RCS in an informative and engaging way. DXM echoed this sentiment and noted the importance of the evidence of the collaborative relationships that the RCS had developed. DXM believed these collaborations should be highlighted as part of any engagement with the SFC.

It was noted that the documentation expressed clearly the scale and scope of the work of the Conservatoire from Juniors through to the Senior Conservatoire and captured explicitly the amount of work managed by the Academic Continuity Group to maintain provision and service throughout what had been an incredibly difficult time.

The Deputy Principal noted that this year's Outcome Agreement report had a (much welcomed) reduced length requirement from the SFC which had allowed a stronger focus on specific topics and embedded hyperlinks that took readers straight to actual recordings of productions. This had enabled RCS to demonstrate the three-dimensional nature of its

pedagogical approach and learner journey, whilst also showing the extent to which it punched above its weight. The Deputy Principal noted the growing importance of the impact statement as part of the SFC's regulatory ask.

Action: The Principal and the Chair to:

- Prepare communications to the Chair of the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) Board and the Director of the SFC raising the Conservatoire's concerns and report back to the Board in April;
- Arrange to meet with the SFC to stress the Conservatoire's role as a national institution which was building creative cross-HE collaborations both within and outwith Scotland;
- Consider organising a parliamentary reception that platformed the work of the Conservatoire to MSPs with the ultimate aim of influencing the cabinet.

In undertaking this endeavour, the Principal and Chair agreed with the suggestion by Board members (MR & EM) that the impact of an epistolary approach could be enhanced by a tactical multi-media comms strategy, including the potential for a reception to MSPs at Holyrood.

The Directors of DDPF and SOM respectively introduced their updates. GB commented on the quality and productivity of DDPF. GM asked the BOG to note that the RCS had been able to hold its first opera production in two years, itself a significant achievement which works across both Schools and most programmes. GM also commented on the current reach of Junior Conservatoire, which reaches 29 out of the 32 local authorities in Scotland.

These reports were followed by introductions to their reports from Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange, Director of External Relations, and the Director of Human Resources.

Whilst the board recognised the work being done to raise RCS's profile through R&KE and in social media, it was also acknowledged that RCS was being affected by recruitment and retention issues besetting workplaces at the moment. LD noted the particular difficulties recruiting staff within professional services such as HR and data analysis, stressing that within an institution the size of the RCS, a single individual could be holding the complete brief (and this could be a potential single pinch-point for service continuity). The Principal acknowledged that there were also growing concerns about the effect of cost of living increases and the 1.5% pay settlement, which looked to be affecting all areas of recruitment. The discussion ended on a positive note, however, as the scale of digital reach was noted and CW indicated the potential and importance of fundraising.

As part of the conversation regarding the scale of activity going on at the Conservatoire, two issues specific to the governors' experience were raised:

1. The need to reintroduce more social engagement by the BOG members, especially attendance at events now that an audience was allowed. The Secretary recognised rebuilding the community of governors following the two years of remote engagement as an imperative.
2. The importance of Governors being engaged in anti-racism and gender diversity training as part of building the inclusive ethos of the whole institution.

ACTION:

- VG & JH to consider how best to implement regular communications with governors regarding events and updates as part of a plan to build the community of governors;
- VG & LD to organise and disseminate appropriate training opportunities for the governors in conjunction with the Conservatoire's EDI team.

6. REPORT FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE STUDENTS' UNION

The President of the Students' Union report was received and noted. The SUP highlighted the effective manner with which the SU had engaged in resolving accommodation issues in the run up to COP, calling out the work of the SUVPM and the Director of External Relations for their work. JC commended the students' productions given the tricky circumstances of their learning and applauded the work done by both students and staff to make sure health and safety priorities were maintained. JC mentioned the welcome support that he had been provided by the Director of Business Development.

In an update to the SUP paper, JC clarified that the SU would be seeking to develop a more systematized handover/induction process for incoming student presidents, ensuring support from a nominated member of staff to help transitioning into and maintaining the effectiveness of the role. JC also reflected on the importance of partnership working and collaboration to minimise the sense of isolation.

7. REPORT FROM THE ACADEMIC BOARD

- 7.1 The summary report of the meeting of 12 January was received and noted. There were no questions.

8. REPORT FROM THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

- 8.1 The summary report of the meetings held on 14 January was received and noted. New Convenor of the Committee, AB, highlighted:
- The satisfactory performance of the RCS investments as identified by the annual investment review which demonstrated gains in line with benchmarks used. AB cautioned the Board to stay attuned to the potential for market volatility and inflation/ rising interest rates and the need for prudent approaches.
 - Investment stewardship (i.e. the principles of responsible investment to mitigate risk and express socio-environmental commitments) and the governance of the Conservatoire's investments through alignment with ESG guidelines regulation and it had been agreed that F&GP members would receive appropriate training in this area.
 - That, with respect to the student accommodation insurance claim (associated with lockdown refunds), RCS had no intention of returning the initial tranche of funds but accepted that it would not be in receipt of any outstanding monies from the insurer.
- 8.2 The TRAC Return for 2020-2021, received and approved by the F&GP, was seen and endorsed by BOG and goes on to submission to the Scottish Funding Council.
- 8.3 The management accounts to end November 2021 were received and noted. Three points were explored by the board:
- i. How did RCS consider going forward to resolve the recruitment problems created by Brexit, the sudden reduction in EU student numbers and the changing income pattern that accompanied it? It was considered too early yet to identify trends in potential areas of European interest in the RCS.
 - ii. The first term drop-out numbers (and their respective cost). VG commented on the work currently underway to introduce an early interventions approach to student welfare as part of strategic development.
 - iii. Tolerances around the budgetary outcomes and the need to manage them more stringently. The Director of Finance and estates noted that rather than

working with tolerances *per se*, the focus was on budgeting for specific shocks (such as claw back, pensions costs and income generation through short courses). The Director of Finance and estates reiterated that the budget established for this year had been a pessimistic one and there were some green shoots around limited clawback as evidenced by the SFC not clawing back in the BEd space.

9. REPORT FROM THE BUILDINGS COMMITTEE

The summary report of the meeting held on 14 January was received and noted. EM highlighted the sustainability improvements for the buildings (including solar panels).

It was noted that the decision on the demolition of the Savoy bridge had been deferred till the end of February by Glasgow City and it was explained that there was a renewed ambition to move into the space currently occupied by the Chinese supermarket at Spiers Lock. The outcome of both of these was viewed as having a direct effect on the Estate's strategy moving forward.

10. REPORT FROM THE HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLBEING COMMITTEE

The summary report of the meeting held on 12 January was received and noted. CM drew attention to the introduction of hybrid working policy; part time staff and training uptake; governors undertaking child protection training. Three points were emphasised:

- i. The continued need to be mindful of balancing resources associated with H&S workloads with actual activity;
- ii. The importance of audiometry and testing in the student body, with some of this year's first year students being found to already have a degree of hearing loss. RCS is looking to extend audiometry into Juniors and work across MEPG to raise the impact of hearing loss on music education, especially for the effects on instrumental development.
- iii. RCS has been experiencing difficulties with the speed of referrals to EAP and is looking to see what alternatives exist (whilst being aware that this is a universal problem rather than one distinct to RCS).

11. GOVERNANCE

There were no governance updates

12. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

12.1 Governor (Director) re-appointment

The Board heard a recommendation from the Nominations Committee that, following the completion of their second term as a Governor, EM be invited to stay on as a governor for a third three-year term. **The Board approved the nomination of Ed Monaghan for a third term of office.**

12.2 Presidential and Vice Presidential appointments

The Board noted the Nomination Committee's reflections on a proposal to rework of the roles and expected contributions of the President and Vice Presidents for RCS which had since been further considered by the Convenors' Group which generated the final note tabled ahead of the meeting. PR reinforced the importance of introducing the President's Circle and interlinking this with the President and Vice President roles. AB noted that this is clearly an opportunity to build on equality and inclusion via representation within the roles. **The BOG endorsed the proposal.**

13. REPORT FROM THE APPOINTING COMMITTEE

A summary report from the Appointing Committee, following meetings held on 8 and 16 December, was received and noted. AR provided a further update on the progress made towards the recruitment of a new Chair and highlighted, in particular, the speed with which the Appointing Committee have turned around the necessary work in the tight timescale. Gratitude was also expressed about the Comms staff at RCS for the work on the microsite. NK added his thanks to the team that has been working on this. It was noted that the electoral process required by the governance legislation is off-putting for some candidates.

14. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Board:

21 April 2022 (Strategy Day)

22 April 2022

24 June 2022

Graduations:

Thursday 7 July 2022

[Potential additional 'catch up' graduation dates from lockdown cohorts – Tues, 5th & Weds 6th July]

Thursday 27 October 2022

Academic Year 2022/23:

Board:

28 October 2022

7 December 2022 (following AGM)

27 January 2023

21 April 2023

23 June 2023

AGM: Wednesday 7 December 2022

Graduations:

Thursday 6 July 2023 tbc

Thursday 26 October 2023 tbc

15. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

1. NK formally thanked AS for his many years of service as the dispenser of the degree parchments at graduation ceremonies;
2. NK expressed to new governors that, having now experienced the board, he hoped they were beginning to feel included and understanding of the organisation;
3. NK asked JS and LF to pass on, behalf of whole board, thanks to the staff of the RCS for all their work over this unprecedented period of disruptions.
4. NK noted that the report on DFC has been deferred until its next meeting.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting.

16. PAPERS FOR INFORMATION

15.1 Committee meeting dates for AY2022/23

The paper was received for information and the meeting dates for AY2022-23 noted.

15.2 Outcome and Impact Framework and Self-Evaluation Report

The paper was received for information, but was spotlighted, as noted in item 5 above.

15.3 QAAS Liaison Meeting 1 (131221)

The paper was received for information.