

December Board meeting report

The first weekend in December saw the Board's very first visit to our state of the art hostel at YHA The Sill. After tales of epic journeys by train, car, bicycle and on foot, all assembled safely on Friday evening and volunteered (such hardship!) to try out YHA Christmas's dinner, beautifully prepared by Ken and Paul from the Food and Beverage team with the Sill team. Hostel manager Richard also spoke to trustees about his own journey into YHA and highlights of a very successful first 18 months in YHA The Sill.

One or two hardy Board members headed out for an early morning run on Hadrian's Wall by torchlight, and it was only just getting light as proceedings began bright and early on Saturday morning.

The first session was an opportunity to update the Board on some of the key topics discussed recently in the Exec business updates. So we had good debates on our trading situation and priorities for next year; likely parameters for the 2019/20 budget and operating plan, early ideas on our future growth strategy and the latest situation at London Stratford. The Board were happy with the direction of travel in these areas and provided very useful feedback as we develop the detail in the coming weeks.

We moved on to a lively debate on the transgender policy, which has been clarified in the light of recent media interest and agreed the revised policy which will shortly be briefed out to the network. The Board also heard about the work we have done to keep on top of risks associated with the current uncertainty on Brexit; and progress with our bid for Government funding to support disadvantaged schools experience nature and the outdoors, where we are pleased to have been shortlisted.

At lunchtime, we were joined by the CEO of Northumberland National Park Tony Gates, whose vision led to the Sill project coming to fruition. Tony talked enthusiastically to trustees about the journey so far and gave us a tour, including onto a very windswept roof!

The afternoon was focused on governance, including brief updates on our plans for next year's AGM, the task group leading on youth engagement and the Nominations Panel who are responsible for recruiting new trustees.



Most importantly however, was an election for the new Chair, as current Chair Peter Gaines has indicated that he intends to stand down after the AGM next June. I am pleased to say that the current Vice Chair, Margaret Hart, has been nominated as Chair Elect, and we will be working closely with Margaret and Peter to ensure a smooth handover during 2019. Margaret spent her career working at senior levels in national children's charities and universities; she also spends much time out and about in the network and is a frequent visitor to National Office. I know Margaret will be keen to meet as many of you as possible over the coming weeks and months.

Many thanks to Richard and his team at YHA The Sill for hosting a great weekend