

National Museums Scotland

Board Of Trustees

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 26 November 2025 at the National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh

Present:

Mr Ian Russell	Chair
Dr Hermione Cockburn	Trustee
Ms Judith Cruickshank	Trustee
Mr Stephen Dando	Trustee
Prof Alistair Hetherington	Trustee
Dr Bridget McConnell	Trustee
Ms Niki McKenzie	Trustee
Ms Beth McKillop	Trustee
Ms Sally Mackay	Trustee
Prof Richard Oram	Trustee
Prof Ian Wall	Trustee

In Attendance:

Dr Chris Breward (CB)	NMS Director
Dr Sam Alberti (SA)	Director of Collections
Ms Michelle Eaves (ME)	Corporate Support Manager
Ms Ruth Gill (RG)	Director of Public Programmes
Ms Helen Ireland (HI)	Director of External Relations
Mr Keith Pentland (KP)	Director of Finance & Resources

Apologies:

Ms Mimi Brophy	Trustee
Prof Manuel Fernández-Götz	Trustee
Mr Graeme Gibson	Trustee
Dr Laura Young	Trustee

Preliminaries

The Chair welcomed everyone to the Board meeting.

Pre-meeting session

Trustees received a presentation from *Global Arts, Culture, and Design* by John Giblin, Keeper and Godfrey Evans, Curator, on Hamilton Palace including his new book and some objects from the collection.

Trustees extended their thanks for the presentation.

Item 1 – Apologies

Apologies were received from Mimi Brophy, Graeme Gibson, Manuel Fernandez-Gotz and Laura Young.

The Meeting was quorate.

Item 2 – Minutes of the meeting held on 24 Sept 2025 NMS (2025) 4th Mtg

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2025 were **approved**.

Item 3 – Matters Arising

3.1 There had been no matters arising from the last meeting.

Item 4 – Declaration of Interests

4.1 It was noted that there were no declarations of interests from Board members in relation to the substantive items on the agenda.

Item 5 – Director’s Report to Trustees

NMS (2025) 35

5.1 The Director presented his report which had been circulated, presenting a summary of activity across National Museums Scotland since the Board meeting in September 2025.

Highlights over this reporting period include:

Impact

- Across our sites, visits for the year to date are 5% ahead of forecast and 3% ahead of last year
- Media announcements about two major acquisitions, the Bronze Age Carnoustie hoard and the Abernethy Pearl, the largest freshwater pearl to be found in Scotland in more than 400 years, garnered extensive national media coverage.

Public Programmes

- *Audubon’s Birds of America* exhibition closed at the Houston Museum of Natural Science (7 March - 1 September 2025) attracting 20,610 visitors and excellent feedback
- *Maths Week Scotland* was well attended, attracting almost 120,000 participants.

5.2 The Director shared details of how he had been actively promoting NMS and raising its profile across the UK and world, since the September Board meeting.

5.3 The NMS Annual Open Evening had taken place on 20 November, which had included a lecture on First Warriors and a presentation of our Annual Review.

Item 6 – Financial Report

NMS (2025) 36

6.1 Keith Pentland presented the report which had been circulated which the Board noted.

6.2 He also gave an update on the budget scenarios which the Board discussed.

Item 7 – Collections & Research Report

NMS (2025) 37

7.1 Trustees noted the Collections & Research Report and congratulated the Collections team on the quality and diversity of the publications.

7.2 Since the report had been written, further publications had been made in “*Nature*” and “*Science*” journals.

7.3 The Board congratulated SA on the paper.

Item 8 – NMS Economic & Wellbeing Impact Assessment NMS (2025) 38

8.1 Helen Ireland (Director of External Relations) presented the report which had been circulated.

Item 9 – Board Committees

Audit & Risk Committee

9.1 The Chair noted that the draft minutes of the Audit & Risk Committee meeting held on 10 September 2025 had been circulated.

Collections Development Committee

9.2 The Chair noted that the draft minutes of the Collections Development Committee meeting held on 15 October 2025 had been circulated.

Nominations & Governance Committee

9.3 The Chair noted that the draft minutes of the Nominations & Governance Committee meeting held on 22 October 2025 had been circulated.

Estates Committee

9.4 The Chair noted that the draft minutes of the Estates Committee meeting held on 3 November 2025 had been circulated.

People & Remuneration Committee

9.5 The Chair noted that the draft minutes of the People & Remuneration Committee meeting held on 5 November 2025 had been circulated.

9.6 SD advised that at their annual meeting with representatives from the Trade Unions the feedback on the quality of relationships between Unions and NMS had been extremely positive.

Finance Committee

9.6 The Chair noted that the next Finance Committee meeting would be held on 12 December.

National Museums Scotland Enterprises Ltd Board

9.7 The Chair of NMS Enterprises Ltd Board gave a verbal updated from the last meeting of 21 November 2025.

Item 10 – Forward Programme of Business

NMS (2025) 39

10.1 The Board noted the forward programme of business.

Item 11 – Any Other Business

11.1 Trustees were reminded to complete the Board Self Review Questions that had been circulated.

Item 12 – Date of Next Meeting

12.1 The next meeting would be held on Wednesday 4 February 2026 at the National Museum of Scotland.