

National Museums Scotland Board of Trustees

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 4 February 2026 at the National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh

Trustees Present:

Ian Russell, Chair	IR
Ms Mimi Brophy	MB
Dr Hermione Cockburn	HC
Mr Stephen Dando	SD
Prof Manuel Fernández Gotz	MFG
Mr Graeme Gibson	GG
Prof Alistair Hetherington	AH
Ms Niki McKenzie	NM
Ms Beth McKillop	BMcK
Prof Richard Oram	RO
Prof Ian Wall	IW

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)

Trustees Apologies:

Dr Bridget McConnell	BMcC
Ms Sally Mackay	SM
Dr Laura Young	LY

Preliminaries

The Chair welcomed everyone to the Board meeting.

Pre-Meeting Session

Trustees received a presentation from Dr Geoff Belknap Keeper, and Meredith Grieling, Acting Keeper, Science and Technology, who gave an overview of the Science & Technology Department, in particular transport and photography.

Trustees extended their thanks for the superb presentation.

Agenda Items

Item 1: Apologies

Apologies were received from Bridget McConnell, Sally Mackay and Laura Young.

The meeting was quorate.

Item 2: Minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2025 – NMS (2025 5th Mtg

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2025 were **approved**.

Item 3: Matters Arising

3.1 Matters arising from the last meeting had been actioned.

Item 4: Declaration of Interests

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

Item 5: Directors Report to Trustees – NMS (2026) 01

5.1 The Director presented his report which had been circulated. Highlights included:

Impact

- Across the calendar year, 2025 has been our busiest year to date with over 3.3 million visits to our four museums. The National Museum of Scotland and the National War Museum had their busiest year on record with over 2.3 million and over 830,000 visits respectively.
- On 13 November, the National Museum of Scotland was the host venue for the first ever Culture Communications Conference devised, created and implemented by the Communications and National and International Partnerships teams

Development

- The value of asks made since the last Trustees Report totals £1.6m
- We welcomed two Members as new Patrons, increasing the proportion of Patrons who were first members to over 25%
- At the November NMSCT meeting 4 new projects grants (totalling up to £392k) were approved. In 2025, 12 projects in total were supported by NMSCT, spanning acquisitions, research, conservation and display projects.

Public Programmes

- Giants opened in SEG1 on 31 January 2026
- A series of updates have been completed in Gallery 6, concluding the long-term project of improvements at the National War Museum
- Sprogmanay Programming family event took place on 1 January with 8,523 visitors taking part.

Digital Media

- The Museum's social media presence grew by 20% year on year by the end of this quarter, and 15% over anticipated growth. Our managed channels (Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, and YouTube) have achieved over 70m impressions as of 31 December 2025

5.2 The Director gave a verbal update on the Pay Award and budget settlement process and negotiations.

5.3 The Director also spoke about the successful launch of *Giants* exhibition which he advised was very well designed, with many layers of information for all audiences.

5.4 The Chair congratulated the team on the report and all their hard work.

Item 6: Financial Report – NMS (2026) 02

6.1 Keith Pentland presented the report which had been circulated, confirming that it represented the overall position for the period to 31 December 2025.

Item 7: Draft Budget 2026-27 – NMS (2026) 03

7.1 Keith Pentland presented the 2026-2027 draft Budget which had been circulated. He confirmed that the final version would go to the Finance Committee in February before coming back to the March Board Meeting for approval. A Medium-Term Plan for 3 years would also be discussed with the Finance Committee.

7.2 The Board was invited to note and comment on the paper.

7.3 The Chair thanked the team for all their hard work.

Action – KP, HI: The Chair asked for more detailed information on Visitor Number forecasts at the next meeting.

Item 8: Finance Strategy – NMS (2026) 04

8.1 Trustees welcomed Jeremy Harper, Head of Finance, to the meeting to present the Finance Strategy that had been discussed in depth by the Finance Committee.

8.2 JH explained the thought process behind the strategy which had been discussed at previous planning days with Trustees.

8.3 Following some discussion, Trustees approved the Finance Strategy.

Action – JH, KP: To deliver a presentation on comments raised in the discussion at the March Board Meeting.

Mid-Meeting Session

Trustees received a presentation from Ruth Gill, Callum MacGillivray and Sarah Teale who gave an overview of what goes into putting on an exhibition.

Trustees extended their thanks for the presentation.

Item 9: Collections & Research Report – NMS (2026) 05

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

Item 10: NMS Board Self Evaluation – NMS (2026) 06

10.1 Trustees note the results from the NMS Board of Trustees Evaluation of the Board which had been circulated.

Item 11: Board Committees

National Museums Scotland Enterprises Ltd Board

11.1 The Chair noted that the draft minutes of the National Museums Scotland Enterprises Ltd Board meeting held on 21 November had been circulated.

Finance Committee

11.2 The Chair noted that the draft minutes of Finance Committee meeting held on 12 December had been circulated.

People & Remunerations Committee

11.3 The Chair of the People & Remuneration Committee advised that there were no updates, and that their next meeting would be on 11 February 2026.

Collections Development Committee

11.4 The Chair of the Collections Development Committee advised that there were no updates, and that their next meeting would be on 4 March 2026.

Estates Committee

11.5 The Chair of the Estates Committee advised that there were no updates, and that their next meeting would be on 5 March 2026.

Audit & Risk Committee

11.6 The chair of the Estates Committee advised that there were no updates, and that their next meeting would be on 17 March 2026.

Nominations & Governance Committee

11.7 The Chair of the Nominations & Governance Committee advised that the committee would be focusing on Trustee recruitment over the spring and summer, and that their next meeting would be on 23 April 2026.

Item 12: Forward Programme of Business – NMS (2026) 06

12.1 The Board noted the forward programme of business.

Item 13: Any Other Business

13.1 There was no other business to discuss at the meeting.

Item 14: Date of Next Meeting

14.1 The next meeting would be held on Wednesday 25 March 2026 at the National Museum of Scotland.