

National Museums Scotland Board of Trustees

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 25 March 2026 at the National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh

Trustees Present:

Ian Russell, Chair	IR
Dr Hermione Cockburn	HC
Mr Stephen Dando	SD
Prof Manuel Fernández Gotz	MFG
Prof Alistair Hetherington	AH
Ms Sally Mackay	SM
Ms Niki McKenzie (in part)	NM
Dr Bridget McConnell	BMcC
Ms Beth McKillop	BMcK
Prof Richard Oram	RO
Prof Ian Wall	IW
Dr Laura Young	LY

In Attendance:

Dr Chris Breward	CB, (NMS Director)
Dr Sam Alberti	SA, (Director of Collections)
Mr Stuart Douglas (in part)	SD (Director of NMSE Ltd)
Ms Michelle Eaves	ME, (Corporate Support Manager)
Ms Ruth Gill	RG, (Director of Public Programmes)
Nr Jeremy Harper (in part)	JH, (Head of Finance)
Ms Helen Ireland	HI, (Director of External Relations)
Mr Keith Pentland	KP, (Director of Finance & Resources)

Trustees Apologies:

Ms Mimi Brophy	MB
Ms Judith Cruikshank	JC
Mr Graeme Gibson	GG

Preliminaries

The Chair welcomed everyone to the Board meeting.

Pre-Meeting Session

Trustees received an overview of Scottish History & Archaeology, along with an update and presentation of objects relating to the National Museum of Rural Life from Dr Rebecca Jones, Keeper of Scottish History & Archaeology, Oliver Taylor, Assistant Curator of Modern and Contemporary History and Ellie Swinbank, Senior Curator, Technology.

Trustees extended their thanks for the superb presentation.

Agenda Items

Item 1: Apologies

Apologies were received from Mimi Brophy, Judith Cruickshank and Graeme Gibson.

The meeting was quorate.

Item 2: Minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2026 – NMS (2026) 1st Mtg

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2026 were **approved**.

Item 3: Matters Arising

3.1 The matters arising from the last meeting were actioned under Items 5.5 and 7 of this meeting.

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) 08

5.1 The Director presented his report which had been circulated.

5.2 The Director gave a verbal update on the commission of a new Carved Pole.

5.3 Finally, he updated Trustees on changes to key roles at Scottish Government and gave a verbal update on a PSR event he had recently attended, sharing highlights with the Board.

5.4 Helen Ireland gave Trustees an overview on, and some context around, the ALVA visitor figures, in which NMS ranked as most visited attraction outside of London. The presentation also addressed the rationale behind our visitor forecasting.

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

Item 7 was discussed next out of agenda order.

Item 7: Financial Strategy follow up Presentation

Trustees welcomed Jeremy Harper, Head of Finance, and Stuart Douglas, Director of NMSE Ltd, to the meeting to deliver a presentation on the items raised from the Financial Strategy at the February Board Meeting.

The Board noted:

- Primary Purpose Trading Income, including the 2025/26 forecast, additions to budget 2026/27 and growth potential
- The implications of the Strategy in relation to organisational culture
- NMSE financial performance for 2025-26
- Changes to online retail including the launch of and redevelopment of the online shop
- Income from hospitality and events, and investments in retail catering.
- NMSE Budget risks and opportunities

Trustees extended thanks to JH and SD for the informative presentations.

Mid-Meeting Session

Communications Managers Alice Wyllie and Bruce Blacklaw explained how NMS tells stories from our collections and places our experts in the media to raise the profile of our organisation and our work nationally and internationally.

Trustees extended their thanks for the informative presentation.

Item 6: Financial Report – NMS (2026) 09

6.1 Keith Pentland presented the report which had been circulated, confirming that it represented the overall position for the period to 28 February 2026.

6.2 The Board noted:

- We were forecasting a small surplus
- We had now received the £300k for the National War Museum
- This report included the recent pay award that had been agreed
- JellyCats sales had the potential to generate additional income.

Item 8: Budget 2026-27 – NMS (2026) 10

8.1 Keith Pentland presented the updated 2026-2027 draft Budget which had been approved by the Finance Committee on 3 March 2026 and circulated. He highlighted changes since the last time it had been presented to the full Board, including assumptions, risks and possible opportunities.

8.2 Following some discussion, the Board **approved** the Budget 2026-27 and expressed formal thanks to the Finance Team.

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

Item 9: Collections & Research Report – NMS (2026) 11

9.1 Trustees noted the Collections & Research Report and SA advised that the disposal of the BAC1-11 had been successfully completed. He presented three books that had been recently published for Trustees to note.

9.2 Trustees congratulated the Collections team on the quality and diversity of the publications.

Item 10: NMS Board Self Evaluation: Actions and next steps – NMS (2026) 12

10.1 Trustees noted the actions presented from the Board Self Review that took place in November 2025 and the Chair/Trustee annual reviews in January 2026.

Action – CB: Trustees requested an update on the actions within six months' time.

Item 11: Board Committees

People & Remuneration Committee

11.1 The Chair noted that the draft minutes of the People & Remuneration Committee held on 11 February 2026 had been circulated.

Finance Committee

11.2 The Chair noted that the draft minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on 3 March 2026 had been circulated. On behalf of the Chair of the Finance Committee, SD gave a verbal update from their meeting.

Collections Development Committee

11.3 The Chair noted that the draft minutes of the Collections Development Committee held on 4 March 2026 had been circulated.

Estates Committee

11.4 The Chair noted that the draft minutes of the Estates Committee held on 9 March 2026 had been circulated.

National Museums Scotland Enterprises Ltd Board

11.5 The Chair noted that the draft minutes of the National Museums Scotland Enterprises Ltd Board meeting held on 13 March 2026 had been circulated.

Audit & Risk Committee

11.6 On behalf of the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee, SM gave a verbal update from their meeting held 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) 13

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 10 June 2026 at the National Museum of Flight.