

# National Museums Scotland Board of Trustees

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 10 June 2026 at the National Museum of Flight

## Trustees Present:

|                            |    |
|----------------------------|----|
| Ian Russell, <b>Chair</b>  | IR |
| Dr Hermione Cockburn       | HC |
| Ms Judith Cruikshank       | JC |
| Mr Stephen Dando           | SD |
| Mr Graeme Gibson           | GG |
| Prof Alistair Hetherington | AH |
| Ms Sally Mackay            | SM |
| Dr Bridget McConnell       | BM |
| Ms Niki McKenzie           | NM |
| Prof Richard Oram          | RO |
| Dr Laura Young             | LY |

## 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)  |
| Ms Moira Mason (in part)      | MM, (Head of Facilities Management)   |
| Mr Keith Pentland             | KP, (Director of Finance & Resources) |
| Dr Lorraine Russell (in part) | LR, (Head of Health & Safety)         |

## Trustees Apologies:

|                            |     |
|----------------------------|-----|
| Ms Mimi Brophy             | MB  |
| Prof Manuel Fernández Gotz | MFG |
| Prof Ian Wall              | IW  |

## Preliminaries

The Chair welcomed everyone to the Board meeting.

## **Pre-Meeting Session**

Trustees received a welcome from Steve McLean, General Manager of NMoF, followed by a Collections presentation and tour of related areas/objects at the National Museum of Flight, led by Meredith Greiling, Principal Curator, Science and Technology, Geoff Belknap, Keeper, Science and Technology, and Ian Brown, Assistant Curator, Aviation.

Trustees extended their thanks for the superb presentation.

## **Agenda Items**

### **Item 1: Apologies**

Apologies were received from Mimi Brophy, Manuel Fernández-Götz and Ian Wall.

*The meeting was quorate.*

### **Item 2: Minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2026 – NMS (2026) 2<sup>nd</sup> Mtg**

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2026 were **approved**.

### **Item 3: Matters Arising**

3.1 The matter arising from the last meeting would be an Agenda item at the Board of Trustees meeting in September 2026.

### **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) 14**

5.1 The Director presented his report which had been circulated. Highlights over this reporting period included:

#### *Impact*

- The National Museum of Scotland achieved record-breaking visitor figures in 2025-26 welcoming over 2.4 million visitors and retained its title as Scotland's most popular visitor attraction (Association of Leading Visitor Attractions, 2025).

#### *Development*

- Funds raised during 2025/26 totalled £2.24 million (across NMS, NMS Charitable Trust and American Foundation for National Museum Scotland).

#### *Digital Media*

- Our social media audiences grew by 21% over the year, three times the target set for 2025/26.

## *External Matters*

- Màiri McAllan MSP has been appointed Cabinet Secretary for Education, Culture and Gaelic.

5.2 The Director gave a verbal update on the 'James Hutton 300' events that had taken place in the National Museum of Scotland and the successful Patrons evening on Fashion also held this week.

5.3 He also reported on his attendance at the Public Service Reform forum that he attended this week, which included a contribution by the First Minister, and engagement with other Public Sector organisations and NDPBs.

5.4 The Director shared information and updates about items of interest for the museums sector that have recently appeared in the news.

5.5 HI was invited to update Trustees on a recent Freedom of Information request that had been received about lost, missing and stolen items.

*Item 6 was postponed until later in this meeting; Items 7, 8 and 9 were taken next out of agenda order.*

## **Item 7: Finance Report – NMS (2026) 16**

7.1 Keith Pentland presented the report which had been circulated and confirmed it represented the overall position for the period from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026.

7.2 The Board noted:

- The movement from Operational Expenditure to Capital
- Income was higher than expected
- Increases to Estates and IT budgets were due to work being brought forward from 2026/27
- NMSE has made a surplus of £900k however this was showing in the accounts as £700k due to overhead charges from NMS.
- We expected to make a small surplus of £48k – 0.1% of total expenditure
- Audit Scotland had begun their audit.

## **Item 8: Collections & Research Report – NMS (2026) 17**

8.1 Trustees noted the Collections & Research Report and SA advised that while we currently focus more on documentation, research outputs were woven through this, including exhibitions. The quantity of the visitors to our National Collections Centre was pleasing to see.

8.2 He reported on the appointment of a new Library Manager who would be instrumental in progressing some of the digitisation of the collections

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

## Mid-Meeting Session

Moiria Mason, Head of Facilities Management, was welcomed to the meeting and delivered a presentation on *Security Matters*, outlining our approach to keeping our people, objects, and sites secure; this included leadership and culture through to processes and procedures.

Trustees extended their thanks for the informative presentation

### **Item 9: Health and Safety Annual Report next steps – NMS (2026) 18**

9.1 Trustees welcomed Lorraine Russell, Head of Health and Safety, to the meeting.

9.2 LR presented the Annual Report which had been circulated. The Board noted:

- Accident data was still trending downwards; across the sector we were still below average
- Wellbeing and absence statistics were included within the report.

*The meeting resumed with Item 6*

### **Item 6: Formal request for the permanent transfer of Aboriginal Ancestors to the Australian Government – NMS (2026) 15**

6.1 The Director of Collections and the Chair of the Collections Development Committee presented a formal request from the Australian Government to transfer four human remains (Z.1925.9.963; Z.H12; A.1898.404 and A.1952.20) which had been considered by the Collections Development committee at their meeting on 13 May 2026.

6.2 The Committee had considered three letters, a comprehensive provenance report, and the National Museums Scotland Human Remains Policy.

6.3 The Board of Trustees, having reviewed these documents carefully, agreed with the Collections Development Committee's recommendation to **approve** the request and to approach the Cabinet Secretary for Education, Culture and Gaelic for her agreement.

### **Item 10: Appointments to Board Committees & related Groups – NMS (2026) 19**

10.1 Trustees noted the current memberships of its committees and related groups.

### **Item 11: Strategy Session Outline**

11.1 The Director presented the proposed outline of the Strategy session for the next meeting, which had been circulated.

## **Item 12: Board Committees**

### **NMS Enterprises Ltd Board**

12.1.1 The Chair noted that the draft minutes of the of the NMS Enterprises Ltd Board held on 13 March 2026 had been circulated.

12.1.2 *Jellycats* had been an innovative way of increasing retail. Retail was benefiting from the increased Visitor Numbers.

### **Audit and Risk Committee**

12.2.1 The Chair noted that the minutes of the of the Audit and Risk Committee held on 16 March 2026 had been circulated. Graeme Gibson (Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee) gave a verbal update of matters arising at the last meeting on 3 June 2026.

12.2.2 A cyber security presentation had been delivered by the Head of ICT, and Audit Scotland had been present at both meetings. The annual review from the internal auditors, Wbg, had also been received which had given Trustees reassurance on the NMS approach to its risk management.

### **Nominations & Governance Committee**

12.3.1 The Chair noted that the minutes of the Nominations & Governance Committee held on 23 April 2026 had been circulated.

12.3.2 He advised that the Trustee interviews would take place on 11 June 2026 and that Stephen Dando would be accompanying him on the interview panel.

### **Collections Development Committee**

12.4.1 The Chair noted that the draft minutes of the Collections Development Committee held on 13 May 2026 had been circulated.

12.4.2 The acquisition of the Elgin Daguerreotypes had been agreed.

### **People & Remuneration Committee**

12.5.1 The Chair noted that the draft minutes of the of the People & Remuneration Committee held on 13 May 2026 had been circulated.

12.5.2 The all employee engagement survey had recently closed, and initial outcomes looked positive.

### **Estates Committee**

12.6.1 The Chair noted that the draft minutes of the Estates Committee held on 18 May 2026 had been circulated.

12.6.2 Sally MacKay gave Trustees an update on NMCC. A Solar panel scheme was agreed for NMoRL. All of last year's capital projects had been completed on time, and under budget.

**Action – CB: Trustees requested that any updates on large projects such as the Collections Centre and Scotland Galleries be included within future Director’s Reports to Trustee.**

### **Finance Committee**

12.7.1 The Chair noted that the draft minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on 26 May 2026 had been circulated.

12.7.2 The results of the PSR benchmarking exercise across the culture cluster had been shared, and JC explained the context around this.

### **Item 13: Forward Programme of Business – NMS (2026) 21**

13.1 The Board noted the forward programme of business.

### **Item 14: Any Other Business**

14.1 There was no other business to discuss at this meeting.

### **Item 15: Date of Next Meeting**

15.1 The next meeting would be held on Wednesday 23 September 2026 at the National Museum of Scotland.