

**NATIONAL MUSEUMS SCOTLAND
BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 7 FEBRUARY 2024 AT THE
NATIONAL MUSEUM OF SCOTLAND, EDINBURGH**

Present:

Mr Ian Russell	Chairman
Ms Ann Allen	Trustee
Prof Mary Bownes	Trustee
Mr Adam Bruce	Trustee
Mr Stephen Dando	Trustee
Prof Manuel Fernández-Götz	Trustee
Mr Graeme Gibson	Trustee
Dr Bridget McConnell	Trustee
Ms Beth McKillop	Trustee
Prof Richard Oram	Trustee
Ms Jandy Stevenson	Trustee
Prof Ian Wall	Trustee
Dr Laura Young	Trustee

In Attendance:

Dr Chris Breward (CB)	NMS Director
Mr Keith Pentland (KP)	Director of Finance & Resources
Ms Julie Brown (JB)	Head of Corporate Policy & Performance
Dr Sam Alberti (SA)	Director of Collections
Ms Helen Ireland (HI)	Director of External Relations
Ms Ruth Gill (RG)	Director of Public Programmes

Apologies:

Ms Mimi Brophy	Trustee
Prof Monojit Chatterji	Trustee
Mr Peter Williamson (PW)	Managing Director of NMSE Ltd

PRE-BOARD SESSION

Geoff Belknap (Keeper of Science & Technology) gave an overview of the Science & Technology Department's collections, their work and current issues, and invited questions from the Board.

Sophie Goggins (Senior Curator, Biomedical Sciences) gave a presentation on *Collecting the Covid Pandemic* and Ellie Swinbank (Senior Curator, Technology) gave a presentation on *Collecting Sustainable Technology*.

Trustees extended their thanks for the presentations.

ITEM 1 – APOLOGIES

1.1 Apologies were received from Mimi Brophy, Monojit Chatterji and Peter Williamson.

ITEM 2 – MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 29 NOVEMBER 2023 **NMS (2023) 5th meeting**

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 29 November 2023 were approved.

ITEM 3 – MATTERS ARISING

3.1 Matters arising from the last meeting were taken under the main agenda items.

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 THE TRUSTEES **NMS (2024) 01**

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

- Across our four museums, calendar year 2023 has been our third busiest year on record (#1 2018; #2 2019) and showed a return to pre-Covid levels of visits. For the calendar year, all the museums were ahead of both forecast and calendar year 2022.
- *Wildlife Photographer of the Year* opened on 20 January in Special Exhibition Gallery 1 at the National Museum of Scotland.
- Six new objects had been put on display in the *Making and Creating* gallery at the National Museum of Scotland.
- Over 260 new labels had been installed into Galleries 4 and 5 at the National War Museum. The new graphics were more accessible and include Colonial History & Legacies updates.

5.2 The Director gave a verbal update on the latest personnel changes in Sponsor Team in Scottish Government. He and the Executive Team were seeking to build good working relationships with the new appointees and assist them in gaining an understanding of our organisation and its role. The Director also reported on the latest progress of the Scottish Government’s Public Service Reform agenda.

ITEM 6 – FINANCIAL REPORT **NMS (2024) 02**

6.1 Keith Pentland presented the report which had been circulated.

6.2 The Board noted:

- Current information suggested we would break even.
- Backdated staff pay increases had now been processed.

ITEM 7 – COLLECTIONS & RESEARCH REPORT

NMS (2024) 03

7.1 Sam Alberti presented the report which had been circulated and highlighted:

- Recent medal and prize winners in the curatorial team.
- The work going on to promote our 'behind the scenes' work in in the external world.

7.2 Trustees noted the Collections & Research Report.

ITEM 8 – DRAFT BUDGET 2024/2025

NMS (2024) 04

8.1 The Chairman and the Director gave a detailed verbal report on the discussions and communications with the Cabinet Secretary, civil servants and the other National Collections bodies since the Scottish Government's budget announcement on 19 December. They confirmed that our 2024/25 budget was showing a very substantial deficit, comprising mainly of the 5% cut imposed by the Scottish Government in the Grant in Aid received by NMS.

8.2 Keith Pentland presented the circulated paper which set out the context and history, the budget assumptions, and the limited and difficult options for achieving the savings required to balance our budget for 2024/25. All Trustees provided feedback including concern that our status as a charity, with accompanying responsibilities for Trustees, was not evidently understood by the Scottish Government.

8.3 Following the wide-ranging discussion, Trustees endorsed the Executive Team's continued exploration of the options for further discussion at the Board meeting on 27 March. It was agreed that:

- The NMS Director would keep Trustees updated over email.
- If required, an online meeting of the Board would be convened before 27 March.

**CB,
Chair, CB,
JB**

ITEM 9 – REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES

(i) People & Remuneration Committee

9.1 The Chairman noted that the draft minutes of the People & Remuneration Committee meeting held on 22 November 2023 had been circulated.

9.2 Mary Bownes (Chair of the People & Remuneration Committee) gave a verbal update on the key issues considered at the recent meeting held on 23 January.

(ii) Collections Development Committee

9.3 Beth McKillop (Chair of the Collections Development Committee) gave a brief overview of the main matters discussed at the recent Collections Development Committee meeting held on 05 February.

(iii) Finance Committee

9.4 Graeme Gibson (Chair of the Finance Committee) confirmed that all key areas had been picked up in the 'Financial Report' and 'Draft Budget 2024/25' items elsewhere on the agenda.

(iv) Estates Committee

9.5 There was nothing specific to report further to the last Board meeting.

(v) Audit & Risk Committee

9.6 There was nothing specific to report further to the last Board meeting.

(vi) National Museums Scotland Enterprises Ltd Board

9.7 Jandy Stevenson (Chair of the NMSE Ltd Board) confirmed that, as noted in the 'Financial Report', NMS Enterprises Ltd was performing slightly ahead of budget.

(vii) Nominations & Governance Committee

9.8 The Chairman reported that Scottish Government had just commenced the preparation of our requested Trustee recruitment round. He gave a brief overview of the plans and undertook to keep the Board updated on progress.

Chair

ITEM 10 – FORWARD PROGRAMME OF BUSINESS

NMS (2024) 05

10.1 The Board noted the Forward Programme of Business.

ITEM 11 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS

11.1 There was no other business.

ITEM 12 – DATE OF NEXT MEETING

12.1 The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 27 March 2024.