



Board of Trustees

Minutes
VABT(26)01

- Date: 29 January 2026
- Time: 14:00 – 16:30
- Venue: Boardroom, V&A South Kensington
- Present: Baroness Shafik – Chair
Allegra Berman
Professor Polly Blakesley
David Bomford
Rusty Elvidge
Mariella Frostrup
Vick Hope
Andrew Keith - online
Amanda Leveté CBE
Akshata Murty
Pedro Pina
Kavita Puri
Baroness Spielman
Marc St John
Nigel Newton CBE
Christoph Lindner
Anthony Misquitta (*Secretary to the Board & General Counsel*)
- In attendance: Sir Tristram Hunt, Director
Dr Melissa Buron, Director of Collections and Chief Curator
Katie Burrell, Director of Design, Estate & Capital Programmes
Dr Gus Casely-Hayford OBE, Director of V&A East
Jane Ellis, Director of Finance & Resources
Nicola Huet, Director of Commercial
Jane Lawson MBE, Director of Development
Judy Roberts, Director of People & Change
Dr Helen Charman, Director of Learning, National Programmes and Young V&A
Sophie Rouse, Interim Director of Audiences
Daniel Slater, Director of Exhibitions
Alexandra Watson Jones, Provenance Research Curator
Frances Greaves, Directorate and Governance Officer
- Apologies: Jonathan Anderson
Zewditu Gebreyohanes
Tim Reeve CBE, Deputy Director & Chief Operating Officer
- Minutes: Saskia Whitfield, Directorate Office Manager
- 1. Welcome and Declarations of Interests**
 - 1.1** Baroness Shafik, Chair of the V&A Board of Trustees, welcomed Trustees to the meeting.

- 1.2 The Chair congratulated the Director, Sir Tristram Hunt on his knighthood in the King's New Year Honours List 2026.
- 1.3 The Chair thanked Trustees and Executive Board for their meetings with the specialist Board Review company, Linstock Ltd and noted they would attend the March Board Meeting to give a summary of their initial findings and recommendations, as part of the three-yearly External Board Effectiveness Review.
- 1.4 There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting and matters arising

- 2.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2025 were approved by the Board. There were no matters arising.

3. Director's Report

- 3.1 The Director updated the Board on key activities of the Museum between November and December 2025, highlighting the State Visit to V&A East Storehouse on 4 December by the German Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier and Ms Elke Büdenbender, accompanied by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport.
- 3.2 In the public programme the Director reported that ticket sales for the upcoming exhibition *Aardman: Wallace and Gromit & Friends* were performing well. The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Galleries are set to reopen on 10 March 2026 after an ambitious refurbishment and expansion. The exhibition *Schiaparelli: Fashion Becomes Art* opens on 28 March 2026, followed by V&A East Museum and the landmark opening exhibition *The Music Is Black: A British Story* on 18 April 2026. The director reported the South Asia Galleries will close on 2 March 2026 for a two year refurbishment.
- 3.3 The Director confirmed the appointment of Kai Chuan Chao as the new Head of International Partnerships.
- 3.4 The Director informed the Board that the management and coordination of the *Culture in Crisis* programme would transfer from the V&A to the Cultural Protection Fund (managed by the British Council), effective from 1 February 2026.
- 3.5 The Director outlined recent international engagement, including visits to key museums and partners across East Asia.

4. Collections Committee

- 4.1 Sir Tristram Hunt, Director and Alexandra Watson Jones, Provenance Research Curator, presented an update on Restitution.
- 4.2 The Museum continues to assess claims within the existing framework of the National Heritage Act, 1983. Recent actions include the pioneering cultural partnership with the Istanbul Archaeology Museum (İstanbul Arkeoloji Müzeleri), which has led to the reunification of the Head of Eros with the Sidamara Sarcophagus, and the tripartite agreement between Manhyia Palace Museum, the V&A and the British Museum that has

enabled the return to Kumasi of 17 items from the V&A and 15 from the British Museum on loan.

5. Strategic focus Objective 5: Build financial resilience to underpin our strategic objectives:

5.1 Exhibitions Business Model

Jane Ellis, Director of Finance and Resources and Daniel Slater, Director of Exhibitions presented a business model for ticketed exhibitions which has been developed to guide programming decisions across multiple V&A sites. The business model was approved by the Executive Board in September 2025 and was also presented and discussed at the Trustees' Finance and Commercial Committee in September 2025.

5.2 The Board noted that exhibitions remain central to the Museum's commercial strategy, driving visitor income, retail performance, and membership.

6. Building Strategy Committee:

6.1 V&A East Update

Dr Gus Casely-Hayford gave an update on progress at both V&A East sites, noting visitor numbers at V&A East Storehouse continued to exceed expectations. The Order an Object service for visitors to request and view items from the Collection not on public display has seen an average of 203 visitors per week engaging through booked appointments. The installation of the opening exhibition *The Music Is Black: A British Story* was in progress and the key partnership with the BBC would create a season of related content and programming, extending the exhibition's reach.

6.2 V&A East Museum Launch Campaign

Sophie Rouse, Interim Director of Audiences presented the launch campaign for the V&A East Museum, positioning the new site as a major cultural resource rooted in east London and shaped by community participation. The core theme of *Why We Make* celebrates making and creativity and aligns with the V&A's strategic commitment to encourage collaboration, challenge and opportunity.

6.3 The campaign aimed to reach, inspire and engage V&A East's key audiences through creative content and channels surrounding *The Music Is Black: A British Story* exhibition and delivered alongside the *Music Is Black Festival*, a programme of performances, displays and live events across Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park developed and supported by key partnerships with the BBC and East Bank partner organisations.

7. Finance & Commercial Committee:

7.1 Finance Update

Jane Ellis, Director of Finance & Resources gave an update on year-to-date financial position, explained the current figures and expressed confidence in the position.

8. Reports from Trustees' Committees

The Board noted the Minutes of Trustees' Committees held since the previous Board Meeting and circulated in advance of the meeting.

9. Any Other Business

9.1 There was no other business

Signed
Minouche Shafik, Chair

Date: