



Board of Trustees

Minutes

VABT(26)17

Date: 26 March 2026

Time: 14:00 – 16:30

Venue: Boardroom, V&A South Kensington

Present: Baroness Shafik – Chair
Jonathan Anderson
Zewditu Gebreyohanes
Allegra Berman
Professor Polly Blakesley - online
David Bomford
Rusty Elvidge
Mariella Frostrup - online
Vick Hope
Andrew Keith
Amanda Leveté CBE
Akshata Murty
Pedro Pina
Kavita Puri
Baroness Spielman
Marc St John
Nigel Newton CBE
Professor Christoph Lindner
Anthony Misquitta (*Secretary to the Board & General Counsel*)

In attendance: Sir Tristram Hunt, Director
Tim Reeve CBE, Deputy Director & Chief Operating Officer
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, Director of Audiences (Interim)

Apologies: No apologies

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 reported on a meeting of museum chairs convened by Arts Council England, where sector-wide issues were discussed, including Baroness Hodge's Independent Review of Arts Council England, and the proposal to introduce a discretionary national tourism levy on overnight accommodation.
- 1.3 The Chair reminded the Board that, under the updated Governance Code on Public Appointments, there is no automatic presumption of reappointment; any renewal would require explicit ministerial approval, with ministers expected to consider the diversity, skills, and experience of the existing Board.
- 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 29 January 2026 were approved by the Board. There were no matters arising.

3. Director's Report

- 3.1 The Director updated the Board on key activities across the Museum between January and March 2026, noting the exceptional performance of *Marie Antoinette Style*, which closed with over 300,000 visitors. He also reported the strong opening of *Inside Aardman: Wallace & Gromit and Friends* at Young V&A, which has seen very high early attendance and membership engagement.
- 3.2 Preparations were in progress for the opening of *Schiaparelli: Fashion Becomes Art* on 28 March, and for *The Music Is Black: A British Story* as the opening exhibition of V&A East Museum on 18 April. The 40th anniversary of the Toshiba Gallery of Japanese Art will be celebrated by an anniversary event for *Urushi Now: Contemporary Japanese Lacquer*, on 29 April, to mark the significance of the gallery and its contribution to the Museum's Japanese collections and programming. He also noted the acclaimed re-opening of the Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Galleries on 10 March, expanded from four to seven rooms, designed by Citizens Design Bureau and funded by the Gilbert Trust for the Arts and Mr Michael W. Garthwaite.
- 3.3 The Director noted that the proposal to consider charging international visitors under a future ID card system forms part of Baroness Hodge's Independent Review of Arts Council England, and advised that the Museum will keep the matter under review.

4. Board Effectiveness Review

- 4.1 Neil Alderton, of the advisory firm Lintstock, summarised the findings and recommendations following a Board Effectiveness Review conducted in 2025, and thanked Trustees for their input and active involvement.

- 4.2** The Review found overall strong Board performance and high levels of Trustee engagement, with most areas scoring above the Linstock Index, and some opportunities identified to further strengthen strategic focus, committee alignment and support for the new V&A Strategy.
- 4.3** The Chair reported on actions already taken in response to the review; one to one meetings between the Chair and Trustees have been scheduled, agendas include updates from two V&A sub-committee Chairs and meetings will be held across V&A sites. It was agreed that the number of Board meetings will be reduced from six to five per year, with meeting length increasing to three hours.
- 4.4** The Board agreed to review and refine the V&A sub-committees at the next meeting, and to consider introducing *ad hoc* working groups for areas such as international tourism trends, finance, exhibition futures and AI.
- 4.5** **Action: The Board agreed that items on Development and Governance would be added to the May 2026 V&A Board of Trustees agenda**
- 4.6** **Action: A dinner for the V&A Board of Trustees and Executive Board to be scheduled in October 2026**

5. Building Strategy Committee:

5.1 V&A East Update

Tim Reeve, Deputy Director & Chief Operating Officer, gave a visual presentation of the V&A East project, tracing its development from the initial concept in 2012 through to completion in 2026 and the plans extending beyond opening. He outlined the significant regeneration taking place in the surrounding area, including proposals to modernise and rebuild Stratford Station and the construction of substantial new residential developments.

- 5.2** Dr Gus Casely-Hayford presented the plans for the opening of the V&A East Museum on 18 April 2026, giving an overview of what visitors will experience when they enter the building for the first time. The curator of the Museum's opening exhibition *The Music Is Black: A British Story*, Dr Jacqueline Springer, was acknowledged for her role in securing loans and establishing the relationships essential to the delivery of the exhibition. A programming partnership with the BBC was highlighted as being particularly strong, providing support to the profile of the opening exhibition.

6. Finance & Commercial Committee

6.1 2026-7 Operational Budget and General Reserves Level

Jane Ellis, Director of Finance & Resources, presented the 2026-27 Operational Budget and General Reserves level to the Board for approval. A detailed paper had been circulated in advance of the meeting, and the Board discussed the need to continue to review and refine key risk management considering world events.

The Board approved the Budget for 2026-27 as presented and the level of General Reserves proposed.

6.2 Soft Facilities Management Contract

Following a rigorous public procurement process with a high level of market engagement, Jane Ellis, Director of Finance & Resources, asked the Board to approve a supplier for the Museum's soft facilities management, covering cleaning and associated services.

The Board approved the soft facilities contract, noting that the successful bidder was the incumbent supplier.

6.3 Action: Jane Ellis to circulate the Operational Budget presentation slides to Board members after the meeting.

7. Reports from Trustees' Committees

7.1 Trustee Collections Committee Update

David Bomford, Chair of the Trustee Collections Committee, provided an update on the work of the Collections Committee. The Collections Committee advises and supports the Director and relevant staff on the development, acquisition, disposal, and loan of objects in the Museum's collections, ensuring these activities align with policy, strategy, and responsible stewardship. The committee receives advice from the Collections Care and Access team on object care, storage, and environmental conditions. All formal approvals relating to collections activities pass through this committee.

7.2 Trustee Audit & Risk Committee Update

Baroness Spielman provided an update on the work of the Trustee Audit and Risk Committee. The committee supports the Board by ensuring the proper use of public funds, high-quality financial reporting, and strong governance, risk management, and internal controls across the museum and its subsidiaries. It reviews audits, financial statements, internal controls, and ethical, health and safety, and risk matters to provide assurance that the museum operates responsibly, effectively, and in line with statutory and delegated requirements. The Security Director has recently joined the committee, strengthening expertise in this area.

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

8. Any Other Business

8.1 There was no other business

Signed
Minouche Shafik, Chair

Date: