

**LONDON, 16 August:** The British Museum has launched an independent review of security after items from the collection were found to be missing, stolen or damaged. A member of staff has been dismissed, and the Museum will now be taking legal action against the individual. The matter is also under investigation by the Economic Crime Command of the Metropolitan Police.

An independent review will be led by former trustee Sir Nigel Boardman, and Lucy D’Orsi, Chief Constable of the British Transport Police. They will look into the matter and provide recommendations regarding future security arrangements at the Museum. They will also kickstart – and support – a vigorous programme to recover the missing items.

The majority of the items in question were small pieces kept in a storeroom belonging to one of the Museum’s collections. They include gold jewellery and gems of semi-precious stones and glass dating from the 15th century BC to the 19th century AD. None had recently been on public display, and they were kept primarily for academic and research purposes.

**George Osborne, Chair of the British Museum, said:**

*“The Trustees of the British Museum were extremely concerned when we learnt earlier this year that items of the collection had been stolen. The Trustees have taken decisive action to deal with the situation, working with the team at the Museum. We called in the police, imposed emergency measures to increase security, set up an independent review into what happened and lessons to learn, and used all the disciplinary powers available to us to deal with the individual we believe to be responsible.”*

*“Our priority is now threefold: first, to recover the stolen items; second, to find out what, if anything, could have been done to stop this; and third, to do whatever it takes, with investment in security and collection records, to make sure this doesn’t happen again. This incident only reinforces the case for the reimagination of the Museum we have embarked upon. It’s a sad day for all who love our British Museum, but we’re determined to right the wrongs and use the experience to build a stronger Museum.”*

**Hartwig Fischer, Director of the British Museum, said:**

*“This is a highly unusual incident. I know I speak for all colleagues when I say that we take the safeguarding of all the items in our care extremely seriously. The Museum apologises for what has happened, but we have now brought an end to this – and we are determined to put things right. We have already tightened our security arrangements and we are working alongside outside experts to complete a definitive account of what is missing, damaged and stolen. This will allow us to throw our efforts into the recovery of objects.”*

**Sir Nigel Boardman said:**

*“The British Museum has been the victim of theft and we are absolutely determined to use our review in order to get to the bottom of what happened, and ensure lessons are learnt. We are working alongside the Metropolitan Police in the interest of criminal justice to support any investigations.*

*“Furthermore, the recovery programme will work to ensure the stolen items are returned to the Museum. It will be a painstaking job, involving internal and external experts, but this is an absolute priority – however long it takes – and we are grateful for the help we have already received.”*

In the interest of working alongside the Metropolitan Police, we will not be commenting any further on this case at this stage.

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**Further information:**

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