# Minutes
## The British Museum Board Meeting 7 December 2023

Held at the British Museum and via MS Teams

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present</th>
<th>In Attendance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>George Osborne Chair</td>
<td>Sir Mark Jones Director</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professor Abhijit Banerjee</td>
<td>Christopher Yates Deputy Director (items 5-11)</td>
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<td>Professor Dame Mary Beard</td>
<td>Dr Carl Heron Acting Deputy Director (items 5-11)</td>
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<td>Dame Elizabeth Corley</td>
<td>Dr Kary Kelly Director of Advancement (items 5-11)</td>
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<td>Clarissa Farr</td>
<td>Jill Maggs Director of Public Engagement (items 5-11)</td>
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<td>Professor Chris Gosden</td>
<td>Russell Torrance Director of Estates and Capital Projects (items 5-11)</td>
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<td>Mr Philipp Hildebrand</td>
<td>Lizzie Loudon Head of Communications</td>
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<td>Dame Vivian Hunt</td>
<td>Dr Eoin Martin Governance Manager</td>
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<td>Lord Jonathan Marland</td>
<td>Sir Nigel Boardman, Lucy D’Orsi,</td>
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<td>Sir Charlie Mayfield</td>
<td>Ian Karet (item 3)</td>
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<td>Mark Pears</td>
<td>Farrer &amp; Co. LLP (items 1-4)</td>
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<td>Sir Paul Ruddock</td>
<td>Saxton Bampfylde (item 12)</td>
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<td>Alejandro Santo Domingo</td>
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<td>Weijian Shan</td>
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<td>Priyanka Wadhawan</td>
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<td>Professor Sir Mark Walport</td>
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<td>George Weston</td>
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<td>Professor Dame Sarah Worthington</td>
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1. **Apologies**

Apologies had been received from Tracey Emin and Baroness Minouche Shafik.

2. **Declaration of Interests**

No interests were declared.

3. **Independent Collection, Security & Governance Review**

The Chair welcomed Sir Nigel Boardman, Lucy D’Orsi and Ian Karet, whom the Board of Trustees had commissioned to carry out an Independent Collection, Security and Governance Review, following the discovery of thefts from the Collection. The Chair also welcomed representatives from Farrer & Co., the firm that had been advising the Independent Review and would continue to advise the Trustees on the recovery of stolen objects.

The Independent Review Co-Chairs presented their findings and recommendations to the Trustees in a closed session. The Trustees expressed their gratitude to them for voluntarily carrying out this work, without remuneration.

*The Co-Chairs of the Independent Review left the meeting.*

4.1 **Consideration of Independent Review Recommendations**

Following a detailed discussion of the Independent Review’s report, the Trustees unanimously accepted its recommendations in full and asked Sir Mark Jones to substantively implement these recommendations by the end of 2024. It was agreed that Sir Mark would report back to the Trustees when they next met in March 2024 and would, at that stage, set out which of the recommendations were in train or already complete; which could be delivered by the end of 2024; and which would need longer to develop practicable solutions to implement.

**Action:** Sir Mark Jones

The Trustees agreed to publish the Independent Review’s recommendations, though redacting those that could, if published, present a security risk to the Museum. The Trustees also agreed that, while the full report could not be published due to the risk of compromising a live investigation by the Metropolitan Police Service, the Museum would publish a timeline from the point at which the Museum was first alerted to suspicions of theft.

**Action:** Lizzie Loudon

4.2 **Audit Committee Update**

Dame Vivian Hunt, Chair of the Audit Committee, presented an update on the Committee’s engagement with the National Audit Office (NAO) about the Independent Review, in their role as the Museum’s external auditor. The Trustees agreed that the Museum should share the Review’s findings and recommendations with the NAO and that a detailed assurance should be provided to the NAO about the discovery that items had been found to be lost, missing, or stolen.
4.3 **Update and next steps on the recovery of lost, missing and stolen items**

The Chair turned to Sir Mark Jones, who updated the Trustees on efforts to recover items found to be lost, missing and stolen. The Trustees considered advice from Farrer & Co. and agreed, subject to any necessary government approvals, to pursue civil litigation against the person suspected of stealing items from the Collection, and to seek Court orders to be able to access information about the sale of items from the Collection.

**Action:** Sir Mark Jones

5. **Documentation of the Collection**

*Farrer & Co. left the meeting, the Chair welcomed Christopher Yates, Dr Carl Heron, Dr Kary Kelly, Jill Maggs, Russell Torrance.*

The Chair turned to Dr Carl Heron to provide an update on plans to complete the documentation and digitisation of the Collection. Carl provided an overview of how this would be done, its resource implications and plans to secure funding from donors and supporters to complete this programme of work over five years, beginning in January 2024. It was agreed that the Trustees should have an opportunity when they met in March 2024 to learn more about the technology that will be used to digitise objects.

**Action:** Dr Carl Heron

6. **Chair’s report**

The Chair provided an update on Trustee appointments: Tracey Emin had joined the Board, Muriel Gray’s resignation had been accepted by the Secretary of State, and the Government was expected soon to launch a campaign to fill five vacancies on the Board.

The Chair thanked the Trustees for volunteering to buddy with individual departments in the Museum, to support the Board’s engagement with and understanding of the work teams across the Museum were doing.

The Chair noted that the Museum’s review of its acquisitions, deaccessions and human remains policies, which were due to be completed by the end of 2023, had been postponed until 2024 due to the diversion of staff resources to support the work of the Independent Review.

The Chair provided an update on his engagement with the Greek government on the potential for a Parthenon partnership. He informed the Trustees that the principles of a partnership, which would see reciprocal loans of objects, remained the focus of discussion.
7. **Director's Report**

The Chair turned to Sir Mark Jones. Sir Mark updated on additional security measures discussed with the Trustees when they met on 27 November to mitigate risks to the collection as a result of potential protest activity.

Sir Mark turned to Russell Torrance, who provided an update on the Masterplan. He outlined plans to launch an architectural competition for the Western Range of the Bloomsbury estate in spring 2024, while progress continued on plans for a new central energy centre, which would see the phasing out of the use of fossil fuels within the Museum’s estate. Russell also informed the Trustees that significant remedial work would be necessary on the Museum’s World Conservation and Exhibitions Centre building, due to water ingress. The Trustees requested that they be kept informed about this matter.

**Action: Russell Torrance**

8. **Minutes of meetings on 29 June, 24, 25, 28 August, 7 September, 6 October**

Draft minutes were considered. It was agreed that they would be circulated by email, along with those of a Board meeting on 27 November, to allow Trustees time to read and approve the minutes as accurate records of the respective meetings.

**Action: Eoin Martin**

9. **Management Report**

The Board noted a management report that had been submitted by the Museum staff.

10. **Committee minutes**

The Board noted the minutes of the Standing Committee meeting on 27 April 2023, and the Audit Committee meeting on 29 June 2023.

11. **Loan approvals**

The Board noted a summary of loans approved by Standing Committee on 27 September and 2 November 2023.

12. **Closed session**

*Dr Carl Heron, Christopher Yates, Dr Kary Kelly, Jill Maggs and Russell Torrance left the meeting, representatives of the executive search agency Saxton Bampfylde joined.*

There was a closed session in which the Trustees were updated on the recruitment of the next Director.

_________________________________________Chair

**Date of next meeting:** 21 March 2024