

NATIONAL FILM AND TELEVISION SCHOOL
230th Board of Governors Meeting
Tuesday 23 June 2026 at 10am at the NFTS, Beaconsfield Studios, Station Road,
Beaconsfield, Bucks HP9 1LG

Sophie Turner Laing (Chair), Paloma Baeza, Farhana Bhula, Paul Clark, Polly Cochrane, Scott Forrest (by Zoom), Patrick Fuller, Andy Harries, John Lee, Pukar Mehta, Charlotte Moore, Kate Phillips (by Zoom), Caroline Silver, Hilary Strong, John Vinney, Kathrine Wandall, Jon Wardle

In attendance: Sue Vertue, Trevor Hall, Alan Thorn, Eleanor Wheal, Ijeoma Akigwe

Apologies: Ash Atalla, Julian Bellamy, Cécile Frot-Coutaz, Andrew McDonald, Stephen Louis

Clerk: Karen Mitchell

The attention of Board Members is drawn to paragraph 2.20 Part II of the CUC “Guide for members of Higher Education Governing Bodies in the UK(2009)” concerning the declaration of personal interests in any matter under consideration by the Board or its Committees

	MEETING OPENING The Chair opened the meeting, noting the apologies received and confirming that there were no declarations of interest. John Vinney was welcomed to his first meeting. On behalf of the Board, the Chair formally thanked the NFTS team and the Gala Committee for delivering a highly successful and enjoyable event. Jon Wardle invited members to share any feedback on the event.
1.	MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING 1.1 <u>Minutes of the NFTS Board Meeting held on 24th February 2026</u> The minutes of the previous Board of Governors meeting held on 24th February 2026 were APPROVED as an accurate record. 1.2 <u>Matters Arising</u> None. 1.3 <u>Actions</u> 2.2 Grosvenor House -Jon Wardle to ask the Project Manager to compile a list of required equipment for members to share with their contacts. (completed) 4.1 The Executive Team to review courses with consistently low numbers of international students to identify any patterns and consider whether different approaches to the application process may be appropriate. (agenda item 4.1)

	4.5 CILG to include on the next meeting agenda connections with female directors, given the recent decline in female representation on this course. (Cfwd) 4.6 All practitioner Board members to send Jon Wardle at least 5 suggestions for potential visiting tutors from ethnically diverse backgrounds. (Completed).
2.	STRATEGY 2.1 Expanding Beaconsfield Campus Jon Wardle presented an update on the expansion of the Beaconsfield Campus. He highlighted developments in project finance and fundraising, noting that through the generosity of two new sponsors Dolby Laboratories and Laika together with John Gore increasing its contribution, the project has now secured £19.8m towards its £21m fundraising target. This leaves a gap of approximately £700k remaining on the Equip and Fit-out budget, which remains the primary focus of current fundraising activity. He outlined three key prospects with whom active discussions are underway, as well as a possible fundraising event in January. Liz Murdoch has kindly offered the use of KoKo as a venue for this event. Jon Wardle advised that construction is progressing well and is currently projected to complete approximately two weeks ahead of schedule. Trevor Hall, advised members that the School is projected to have sufficient funds to cover both the purchase of the building at practical completion and other planned estates work during the summer 2026. He explained that the next phase is to fit-out and equip the new building in preparation for the new January 2027 cohort at a cost of £2m. This will create a temporary cashflow issue as £1.9m of funds are contracted but not payable until 2027 and 2028. Trevor Hall outlined a range of options and approaches that had been explored and comprehensively reviewed by the F&GP, Audit and the Expansion Development Committees in June 2026. The recommendation is the Barclays proposal of a Revolving Credit Facility up to £2m, and noted that terms were attached in the meeting pack. Following comprehensive discussion, It was RESOLVED: To approve the Barclays Revolving Credit Facility up to £2m from September 2026, if required.

Trevor Hall also advised that the DCMS had been approached to see if they could provide gap funding but they have now confirmed that they are unable to help.

2.2 Vision, Objectives and Goals (VOG) 2026/27

Jon Wardle presented the goals that the School management team will work to deliver over the next twelve months, which are aligned to the Strategic Objectives in the Corporate Plan 2023-2028.

The key highlights against the objectives included: the next stages for the Sean Connery Talent Lab; the launch of new courses; the opening of the new building; the opening of the Pinewood CoSTAR facility, which had been delayed from the previous year and for which the School is a secondary partner; and early work experimenting with a micro-drama.

Jon Wardle reported on the Apprenticeship growth goal and highlighted a recent rule change preventing freelancers delivering on programmes, noting that this presents a significant challenge for the School. He advised on actions being taken including communication with the DCMS.

In response to a member's query on expanding the Sean Connery Talent Lab, Jon Wardle referred to his later report, highlighting in principle a new long-term five-year commitment. This would increase the Sean Connery Foundation's annual funding from £300k to £600k and a commitment from the Foundation in principle to purchase a permanent building in Edinburgh.

A point was made on international student recruitment and it was agreed to include within the VOG.

Action:

Jon Wardle to reference International Student Recruitment in the VOG for 2026/27

There was a robust discussion on the Apprenticeship strategy and the longer-term horizon considerations that the Board should keep under review. It was agreed that this would be included as an agenda item for further scrutiny at the November Board meeting.

Action:

To include the Apprenticeship strategy for wider discussion at the November Board meeting.

After the discussion was concluded the VOG was **Agreed**.

2.3 Five Year Financial Forecast

Trevor Hall presented the proposed five-year financial forecast to July 2031, highlighting the key assumptions underpinning the model:

- **Tuition Fees** — the forecast assumes an increase of £500 to both the 2-year MFA and 1-year MA tuition fees, noting the School's intention to limit fee increases to every other year going forwards.
- **Staff Pay Rises** — May's RPI is 3.1%, which determines the annual staff pay rise in line with the BECTU agreement.
- **Courses** — the model incorporates five new MA courses and one new MFA course scheduled to launch in January 2027, aligned with the opening of the new building.
- **New Approaches to Delivery** — the forecast assumes the launch of at least one new apprenticeship in 2026/27.
- **Cost Inflation** — support services cost inflation is capped at 2%, reflecting the Government's inflation target. Curriculum budgets are frozen for 2026/27, with a continued focus on in-department efficiencies.
- **CAPEX Budget** — capital expenditure is reduced to £550k for 2026/27, with an expectation of returning to £1.1m per year from 2027/28.
- **Debt** — the forecast assumes no debt will be required to fund Grosvenor House, bar the short-term gap funding arrangements previously reported under item 2.1 Expanding the Beaconsfield Campus .

A discussion and review of the plan took place which included; comparing the surplus percentage and the average for the HEI sector; approaches to target setting for departments; fixed costs and controlling cost base; class sizes, production costs and; course fee setting comparators with other providers.

Following comprehensive discussion and scrutiny

It was RESOLVED:

To approve the five-year financial forecast, including:

- **Increase staff salaries for 2026/25 by RPI May 2026 at 3.1%.**
- **Approve the fee for the two-year MFA fee at £15,950 (overseas £27,600) and one-year MA fee at £14,450 (overseas £22,450).**
- **Approve the fee increase for part-time diplomas and certificates at approx.3.5-4%.**

2.4 Strategy Day Planning

Jon presented the outline proposed agenda for the September 2026 Strategy Day and Board Meeting. He noted that there would be a strategy session on Games, followed by a session on risk and scenario planning. The sessions and the Board meeting the following day would be held at the Sean Connery Talent Lab, with the opportunity to tour the First Stages Studios.

Action:

Members to let Sarah Collins know their arrangements and requirements.

	Members endorsed the Strategy Day agenda.
3.	UPDATES FROM COMMITTEES 3.1 Audit Committee Caroline Silver presented the minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 2nd June 2026. She advised the Board on the outcome of a recent internal audit with Use of Credit and Pre-Paid Credit Cards receiving Substantial Assurance and one Priority 3 (low) recommendation. The Board congratulated Trevor Hall and the team on the excellent outcome. Other areas highlighted to the Board from the report included an update on internal audit progress, the Internal Audit Plan noting the replacement of the HE-BCI Data return audit with the sector theme review of AI, the external audit planning and the annual review of the Accounting Policies. The Committee reviewed the Whistle Blowing and Anti-Bribery Policy and are recommending the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy to the Board for approval. The Risk Register was reviewed and the Committee agreed a deep dive of a bundle of risks around the impact of curriculum changes. Trevor Hall reported to the Committee the impact of the late notification of the Amazon's contract sponsorship renewal. Eleanor Wheal presented an update on Safeguarding and the prevent Duty, and the Committee approved the updates to the Prevent Policy. Following the Apprenticeship update, the Committee agrees on the importance of a wider strategic discussion on apprenticeship programmes. The Report was NOTED. 3.2 F&GP Committee Hilary Strong presented the minutes of the F&GP Committee meeting held on 2 June 2026. She advised that the Committee had reviewed the current cashflow projection and the temporary cashflow gap with the various options and recommend the Revolving Credit Facility offered by Barclays Bank as the preferred route. Other areas highlighted to the Board included the agreement of the VOG for presentation to the Board, and the Committee's scrutiny of the five-year financial plan and recommendation to the Board for approval. Hilary Strong noted that this discussion included comparisons with staff pay within the industry, which were below RPI, while recognising other relevant factors such as bonuses and higher pension contributions. Jon Wardle confirmed to the Board that he had approached BECTU to discuss using an earlier month's RPI figure to calculate staff salary increases to provide greater certainty for budget setting purposes.

She concluded that the Committee had received the Environmental Sustainability Strategy to 2030, noting the 62% reduction in carbon emission. Following review of the Strategy Initiatives Plan 2026-2030, the Committee are recommending approval by the Board.
The Report was **NOTED**.

3.3 GAR

Sophie Turner Laing presented a verbal update on the activities of the GAR Committee. She advised the Board that the recently completed member's Skills Matrix had been reviewed and there were currently no material skills gaps. She reported on a GAR extraordinary meeting to discuss Andrew MacDonald's replacement at the end of his term in November, and advised that a shortlist is now being progressed.

Other forthcoming governance changes include Caroline Silver and Polly Cochrane have agreed to stay for a second term, John Lee's term as staff governor ends in September with a new staff governor elected for the November meeting, and Charlotte Moore has agreed to chair the Ethics Advisory Committee with Sophie Turner Laing and Paul Clark.

For the next agenda item, management, staff and student representatives left the meeting.

A confidential paper on Remuneration of Senior Staff and GAR Recommendations to the Board was circulated.

Caroline Silver led the discussions on the proposal from GAR for the remuneration package for the Director and **approved** the proposal.

The Board discussed and **approved** the proposal from GAR for the remuneration package for the Finance Director.

The Board **approved** the proposal from GAR for the Clerk.

The Board **endorsed** the recommendations for the remaining members of the senior leadership team.

The GAR Committee Update was **NOTED**.

3.4 Expansion Development Committee - For Information

It was agreed that this was covered in previous items and the minutes were **NOTED**.

3.5 Academic Board

Eleanor Wheal presented the minutes of the Academic Board meetings held on 1 April 2026 and 27 May 2026. Areas that she highlighted to the Board

	included the positive outcome of the Student Satisfaction Survey and the positive exam reports. Kathrine Wandall provided an insight from the student perspective including working with the Academic Board on course approvals, the structure of the courses, and student well-being. The Report was NOTED.
4.	REPORTS 4.1 Director's Report Jon Wardle updated members on his key activities since the last Board meeting. He reported on the review undertaken into international recruitment on courses with consistently low numbers. He advised that the review found only two courses with continued low international recruitment: Screenwriting where demand exists but conversion remains challenging, and Location Sound, which continues to experience low application numbers. Jon Wardle reported that international applications had declined by 12% in 2026 compared with 2025, noting that this trend reflects what is being seen across the wider UK higher education sector. He highlighted that the School's largest international markets, India and China, showed the sharpest decline. He advised that the number of Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) issued in 2026 was 15 lower than in 2025, noting that this reduction was largely attributable to changes in the School's portfolio rather than any weakening in recruitment performance. Members discussed the marketing strategy for recruiting International Students, and Ijeoma Akigwe outlined the approaches and mechanisms the School uses for this market. Jon Wardle reminded members that the School continues to receive funding through the OfS World Leading Specialist Institutions allocation, awarded by the Department for Education Special Grant Funding. He noted that the School is one of 17 institutions currently qualifying for this award. He reported on the potential risk to funding as the Department for Education and OfS are currently reviewing the future priorities of the Special grant Funding. The NFTS are working with other institutions to make the case for its continued importance. Jon Wardle thanked the Board for their support in making the Gala evening a great success and reiterated that he would welcome feedback on the event to inform planning for the next one. He reported to the Board on the loss of Amazon as a key partner sponsor, noting that the decision reflected the organisation's need to respond to wider

changes in industry priorities. He outlined the areas of continued support from Amazon, as well as the development of a positive relationship with the separate Los Angeles based team, which has already resulted in new sponsorship commitments for upcoming courses.

Other areas highlighted to the Board included an update on the Sean Connery Talent Lab, a discussion on a new NFTS Micro/Vertical Drama Project initiative, new sponsorships and an update on progress against the VOG 2025/26.

In response to a member's question, he updated the Board on the Camden Building.

Following further discussions the report was **NOTED**.

4.2 Finance Director's Report

Trevor Hall presented to the Board the financial performance for the nine months to 30 April 2026. He advised members that the net operating results to the end of April 2026 were slightly behind budget. This was due primarily to clawback on Creative Scotland grant funding for 2023/24 following audit as advised at the February meeting.

Trevor Hall advised members on the cash position and two key items impacting on this including the previously reported £1.5m NFTS free cash-flow deposited with Lloyds Bank as security against the Grosvenor House bank guarantee. He reported that this gap is expected to reduce by approximately £1m following a recent donation that the School's lawyers has confirmed is unrestricted, and provided members with details of the donation.

Trevor Hall took members through the key areas impacting the financial forecast and concluded that, based on these factors, results are currently projected to exceed budget.

After comprehensive discussion the report was **NOTED**.

4.3 Student Union Report

Kathrine Wandall presented her report to the Board highlighting the excellent progress made with increasing student societies. She reported that there are now 15 active societies and cinema clubs and gave some examples of recent events. The Board congratulated her on the progress.

She also reported on a new Student Representative election system to increase engagement and applications for student representatives. She noted it had prompted a lot of discussion and so far there were 4 applications for the forthcoming elections, which is an improvement on previous elections.

The report was **NOTED**.

	4.4 Curriculum and Short Course Report Alan Thorn provided members with an update on key curriculum activities since the last meeting. His report covered an update on progress reviews, course approval event for the Hair and Make-Up MA, apprenticeship funding rules, the Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Strategy, the Research Strategy 2026 Action Plan and current activities across the regions. The main area of the report focused on the work undertaken to integrate AI into the curriculum. This included working with the Creative Industry Liaison Group (CILG), the development of a draft NFTS Staff AI Usage Policy, and an update of the AI Principles. A useful discussion took place with further member insights for AI and Curriculum integration. The report was NOTED.
5.	ANY OTHER BUSINESS 5.1 Environmental Sustainability Update (TH) Trevor Hall advised members on the proposed Environmental Sustainability Strategy to 2030. He informed members that in February 2026, the School had received a report from the Carbon Trust confirming that the School has reduced its carbon emission by 62% compared to 2019 base line and a new baseline set. He explained that the Carbon Trust has worked with the School to develop a Strategic Initiatives Plan 2026-2030 and outlined the six key themes for the School to work to deliver to accurately monitor and reduce carbon emissions: • Data collection • Supplier Engagement • Travel • Buildings • Productions • Awareness Trevor Hall reported that a detailed implementation plan had been developed from the Strategic Initiatives review to monitor progress and provided a link to the plan. He informed members of a proposed Sustainability Policy and Summary Strategy available through the link. The Board congratulated Trevor Hall and the School on the efforts being taken to reduce carbon emissions. Following further discussion It was RESOLVED:

	To APPROVE the Environmental Policy and Strategic Initiative Plan to 2030. 5.2 NFTS EDI Policy and Action Plan Eleanor Wheal presented the revised Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, which has been reviewed in line with the School's scheduled policy review cycle. It is proposed that the current Equality Diversity and Inclusion Strategy be replaced with a new Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy and accompanying action plan. She advised that the Equality Action Plan builds on the School's diversity commitments and the actions taken since 2020 in relation to racial inclusion, disability, and trans equality. The Plan sets out deliverables for the next 12 months, which will be monitored regularly and updated on an annual basis. Following a query raised at Audit Committee, Eleanor Wheal confirmed the EDI Policy is not part of the School's formal constitutional framework and therefore is not a governing document. Following discussion the Policy was APPROVED. 5.3 Proposed Calendar of Meetings 2027 The proposed Calendar of Committee and Board Meetings for 2027 was AGREED. Members will shortly receive diary invitations for 2027.
6.	DATE OF NEXT MEETING Board Strategy Afternoon and Dinner – Monday 21st September 1.30-9.00pm at the Sean Connery Talent Lab, 2B, 80 Commercial Street, Edinburgh, EH6 6LX/Dinner TBC Board of Governors Meeting – Tuesday 22nd September 9.00-11.30am at the Sean Connery Talent Lab, 2B, 80 Commercial Street, Edinburgh, EH6 6LX
7.	BOARD BRIEFING Brian Wedlich, Model Maker student, reflected on his studies, journey and next steps. Members were very interested to hear about his experiences, projects and the impact his course has had on the development of his skills and work. They were particularly interested to hear about his volunteering on film sets and his use of digital skills in his model making. In response to a question on next steps and how students were feeling about finding employment, he advised that everyone was feeling positive and confident about their next steps in the industry. The Board thanked him for sharing an excellent presentation and wished him well for the future. Hilary Strong offered to introduce him to an industry specialist
	The meeting ended with lunch and an opportunity to meet with NFTS staff and students.

