NATIONAL FILM AND TELEVISION SCHOOL
231st Board of Governors Meeting
Tuesday 22 September 2026 at 10.45am at the
Sean Connery Talent Lab,
2B, 80 Commercial Street, Edinburgh, EH6 6LX

Sophie Turner Laing (Chair), Ash Atalla, Paloma Baeza, Julian Bellamy, Polly Cochrane, Scott Forrest, Cécile Frot-Coutaz, Andy Harries, John Lee, Andrew McDonald, Pukar Mehta, Charlotte Moore, Kate Phillips, Caroline Silver, Hilary Strong, John Vinney, Kathrine Wandall, Jon Wardle

In attendance: Sue Vertue, Gillian Carr (by Zoom), Trevor Hall, Stephen Louis, Alan Thorn, Eleanor Wheal, Ijeoma Akigwe

Apologies: Paul Clark, Patrick Fuller, Farhana Bhula

Clerk: Karen Mitchell (by Zoom)

The attention of Board Members is drawn to paragraph 2.20 Part ll 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 by thanking members for travelling to Scotland for the Strategy Day and meeting, and persevering through travel disruptions. She noted that the work taking place in Scotland represents an important part of the School's strategy. She thanked Jon Wardle, the Management team and the Scottish team for the arrangements and the quality of the content. Members reflected on the Strategy Day, their learning and the key takeaways from the day. All agreed that the day was important to the work of the NFTS and provides a strong foundation for the next five-year Corporate plan and strategy. The Chair welcomed Ash Atalla to his first meeting, and noted apologies from Susan Lea who is joining the Board in November, and had planned to attend as an observer.
1.	**MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING** 1.1 Minutes of the NFTS Board Meeting held on 23 June 2026 The minutes of the previous Board of Governors meeting held on 23 June 2026 were **APPROVED** as an accurate record.

1.2 Matters Arising

1.2.1 **B3 Student outcomes data** – Eleanor Wheal reported that the release date has been delayed by the OfS to the Autumn and will be reported at the November Board meeting.

1.2.2 **Application to the Charity Commission to Change Charitable Objects** Trevor Hall advised members that following a review by Eversheds, it was identified that whilst periodic changes to the School's Articles of Association from a 2019 review, when the School opened up a Hub in Scotland had been correctly registered with Companies House, the Charity Commission had not been advised. Eversheds have drafted a letter advising of the omissions and the key changes to the School's Articles and Objectives that have not been communicated to the Charity Commission, being:

- The addition of "television and new media"
- Operating in Scotland

The changes are not contentious.

Following points of clarification, the Board **APPROVED** the letter to the Charity Commission.

1.3 Actions

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

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

2.4 Strategy Day - Members to let Sarah Collins know their arrangements and requirements.

Actions were confirmed as completed

2. **STRATEGY**

2.1 Expanding Beaconsfield JW)

Jon Wardle presented an update on the expansion of the Beaconsfield Campus. He highlighted developments in securing approximately £20m towards its £21m target and a significant sponsor that has almost been secured. Two members are continuing to follow up a further potential sponsor.

He advised that the contractor has confirmed practical completion for 9 October 2026, followed by a two-week snagging period.

The commissioning of fit-out works has started with the F&GP committee agreement against the fit out plan and will start on 26th October 2026. All works scheduled are due for completion by 18 December 2026, leaving three weeks for contingency. He noted that the next Board meeting in November would start with a tour of the new building.

Jon Wardle advised that the 'Wind and Watertight' milestone had been reached, which releases the DCMS final tranche of funding. He reminded members of the terms agreed with Barclay Bank for Revolving Credit Facility, approved at the June 2026 Board meeting, to fund the fit-out works, pending outstanding donations due to be paid in January 2027. He explained this is unlikely to be required, as the School has secured a new, significant three-year delivery contract with activity starting January/February 2027. The associated income will be payable in advance providing temporary support for the cashflow needed for the Autumn fit-out works, prior to outstanding donations being received.

Jon Wardle reported on the current position of recruitment for courses to be delivered out of Grosvenor House with the majority of programmes attracting interest and healthy recruitment, highlighting Costume Design, Hair & Make-up, and Virtual Production. The VFX programmes are likely to slightly under recruit against target. He confirmed, in response to a members question that VFX will still break even as this is built into provision for under recruitment. The allocation of the new accessible student accommodation is progressing well with four confirmed places for January 2027. He reminded members that the intention was not to reach full capacity, in order to ensure that places can continue to be offered in year two, where students are on two-year courses.

He concluded his report with an update on the opening planned for Thursday 21 January 2027.

Following further discussion, Jon Wardle confirmed that the new music recording studio would be delayed until next summer.

The report was **NOTED.**

2.2 Report on 2026 Staff Survey

Gillian Carr presented the results of the 2026 Staff Survey to the Board. She advised that engagement with the survey was 78% (120 staff).
She summarised the key outcomes from the survey including: staff engagement remains high with 94% of staff being proud to work at the NFTS; 89% of staff recommending the School as a great place to work; and support for the vision and values of the School at 91% .

She highlighted three areas where there had been changes of over 5% and actions that were being taken. In particular, there was a 5% reduction in staff reporting that they have the tools and resources needed to do their roles effectively. She noted that comments largely related to the replacement cycle for staff laptops. This year, £40k has been invested into upgrading devices, enabling a third of staff to receive new laptops, which has been warmly welcomed.

She closed her report with the key priorities for the next 12 months:

- Prioritise investment for the everyday tools staff need to do their jobs effectively;
- Ensure the existing estate keeps pace with investment in the School's growth;
- Further embed a culture of respect, inclusion and accountability;
- Communicate earlier, more consistently and more directly.

Following discussion including plans for areas of the survey where there has been little change the report was **NOTED.**

2.3 Annual KPI Results (TH)
Trevor Hall updated the Board on the performance against the School's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for 2025/26 and proposed changes to future KPI targets.

He reminded members that the KPIs to July 2026 are aligned to the School's Corporate Plan 2023-2028, the theme being:

- Expanding nations and regions provision;
- Shaping future storytelling;
- Promoting teaching excellence through R&D;
- Enhancing student support; and
- Fostering new graduate opportunities

He highlighted key measures that had met or exceeded target and summarised those that were projected to fall short, including the number of NFTS students on Games, Virtual Production and Real Time Production courses. Members linked this to the Strategy Day discussions, noting wider reflections on the games industry and comparisons with other providers. Jon Wardle confirmed that forthcoming OfS B3 outcomes data will offer a comparative dataset.

Trevor Hall explained that some KPI targets had been revised with the rationale for the amended targets. It was confirmed that this set of KPIs would continue to be monitored until the new Corporate Plan is developed.

The report was **NOTED.**

2.4 University Mental Health Charter (UMHC)
Eleanor Wheal shared the outcome of the School's submission for the University Health Charter (UHMC). She was delighted to report that in August 2026, Student Minds confirmed that the School has achieved a University Mental Health Charter Award. The Board congratulated the team involved on a significant achievement and thanked them for their hard work.

She completed her report noting that the NFTS is the only small specialist institution to date to have received a Mental Health Charter Award, and one of only 25 universities to have received an award.

	Discussion focused on the students' experience of the support available for their wellbeing and mental health. Kathrine Wandall confirmed that everyone she has spoken reported a good experience of the student wellbeing. They particularly felt seen and understood by Student Wellbeing on production, and appreciated being encouraged to take a proactive approach to improving their wellbeing including support around nutrition, relationships and understanding standards and expectations. After further discussion the report was **NOTED.**
3.	**UPDATES FROM COMMITTEES** **3.1 Minutes from Audit Committee** Caroline Silver presented the minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 9 September 2026. She advised the Board on the outcome of recent internal audits noting that Grosvenor house received Substantial Assurance with one Priority 2 recommendation, and Graduate Opportunities received Substantial Assurance with no recommendations. She added that in comparison with other providers, the Auditor had highlighted Graduate Opportunities as a particularly strong area. Other areas highlighted to the Board from the report included an update on the progress of the 2025/26 audit plan, with all audits confirmed as completed with Substantial Assurance and delivered on budget. The Committee also reviewed the draft Annual Internal Audit Report, in which the auditors provided Substantial Assurance that the School maintains effective arrangement for risk management, control and governance. The Committee approved the final Internal Audit Plan for 2026/27. Board members congratulated Management on an excellent outcome. The Committee reviewed and approved the Freedom of Speech Code of Practice and Conflicts of Interest Policy, and noted the annual review of Freedom of Information Publication Scheme and Public Policies. She advised members that following review of the Risk Register, the Committee had agreed to establish AI as a separate risk and keep under review. Following a wider discussion on AI, Board members agreed this was a sensible approach. Eleanor Wheal updated the Committee with a comprehensive account of a student complaint. She confirmed that there were no safeguarding incidents to report. The Committee reviewed the compliance with OfS Conditions of Regulation. Eleanor Wheal also provided an update on apprenticeships, and the recent Ofsted outcome. Board members noted the successful result and congratulated the management team.

Caroline Silver confirmed that the Committee had scrutinised in detail the assessment of the principal risks to the School's 'Going Concern' and are comfortable with the assurance that the School is a Going Concern.

Caroline Silver concluded her report with a risk deep dive activity the Committee had considered with regards to curriculum changes.

Following further discussion and points of clarification, the report was **NOTED.**

3.2 Minutes from F&GP Committee

Hilary Strong presented the minutes of the F&GP Committee meeting held on 9 September 2026. She advised that the the main focus of the meeting was the scrutiny of the Fit-Out and Refurbishment budget. The Committee considered the itemised budget and total cost, alongside Jon Wardle's request for permission to commission the budgeted items identified in the plan.

Following careful consideration, the Committee agreed that the team could commission the plan, provided there were no overages and the total amount remained within the agreed envelope. Jon Wardle added that the rationale for the request was the lead times associated with key items, which could impact the overall schedule if commissioning was delayed.

Trevor Hall advised the Committee on the tender rationale and process for appointing a new outsourced catering supplier to the School. The Committee approved the appointment of Chapter One.

The Committee reviewed financial performance, the annual Health and Safety report, annual KPI results, scrutinised the Going Concern analysis and agreed with the assurance provided. The Committee also considered the impairment review and endorsed Management's opinion. The Scheme of Delegation was reviewed with a minor name change noted.

Jon Wardle highlighted from the Health and Safety report the details of one RIDDOR reportable accident, and actions being taken to comply with Martyn's Law. He advised that the School has purchased a phone app system, which is downloaded by students and staff at the beginning of term and provides alerts around the site.

Following a wider discussion on the different alert options available and the rationale for the app, the report was **NOTED.**

3.3 Minutes from Academic Board

Eleanor Wheal presented the minutes of the Extraordinary Academic Board meeting held on 30^{t} June 2026. The primary focus of the meeting was the annual Quality Assurance Evaluation Report, chaired by John Vinney. She confirmed this will be reported at the November Board meeting.

	The Chair encouraged members to attend next year's Extraordinary Academic Board meeting. **Action: Eleanor Wheal to provide members with the date for the 2027 Extraordinary Academic Board meeting.** The minutes were **NOTED.** **3.4 GAR Committee Appointment Update** The Chair presented a verbal report on the proposal for two new governor appointments. She reminded members that Andrew MacDonald finishes his Term of Office on 20th November 2026. She advised that the GAR Committee had met early summer to consider potential candidates and the criteria for a replacement member. The GAR Committee is recommending to the Board the appointment of Dame Pippa Harris. She is the Co-Founder of Neal Street Productions and the Producer of *'Hamnet'* and *'Call the Midwife'* with extensive experience across film, television and theatre. The GAR Committee is also recommending to the Board the appointment of an additional member to the Board, Alison Lomax, MD YouTube UK and Ireland. It was noted that the NFTS Articles of Association (section 20) allows for no more that 25 governors. With an additional governor appointment the Board will have 22 members. Board members unanimously agreed the benefits and value both appointees would bring to the NFTS and Board. Both appointments were **APPROVED.** **NFTS Foundation Update** Stephen Louis provided a verbal update on the activity of the NFTS Foundation, reminding members that the Foundation is a connected charity to the School and provides individual scholarships from monies received from individual and family donors. These restricted funds are managed by Rathbones. He advised on the recent transfer of monies from the David Lean Foundation following its cessation, to the NFTS Foundation. He outlined the background to the David Lean Films Limited, now a subsidiary of the Foundation, and potential benefit this may bring to the Foundation. Stephen Louis answered a number of questions from members relating to the NFTS Foundation, and following further discussion the update was **NOTED.**

	3.5 Minutes from the Expansion Development Committee (STL) The minutes from the Expansion Development Committee are included for information. It was agreed that updates on the project had been covered in 2.1. and the minutes were **NOTED.** **3.6 Report from Creative Industries Liaison Group (CILG)** As a meeting had not yet taken place, it was agreed to defer this item to the November Board Meeting.
4.	**REPORTS** **4.1 Director's Report** Jon Wardle updated members on his key activities since the last Board meeting in June 2026. The core focus of his report and subsequent discussion was on the OfS Strategic Priorities Grant. He reminded members that the Schools continues to receive a significant annual allocation through the OfS World Leading Specialist Institutions allocation. He noted that the DfE and OfS are reviewing the future priorities of the programme and confirmed that funding would be rolled over for 2027/28 while the consultation and application process takes place. He advised members that the NFTS has joined with other Grant holders to commission Frontiers Economics to assess the impact and value of the funding. This will support the collective case for the programme's continuation. He also reported on plans for an event in November to present the findings and strengthen engagement with government. Members discussion included the potential risks and likelihood of the funding continuing, noting the importance of the programme to the School's strategic and financial position. **Action: Jon Wardle to provide members with the link to the Frontiers Economic Report** Members discussed the planning for the Gala 2027, the confirmation of the co-chairs and the supportive, developing relationship with Netflix. Jon Wardle closed his report with an update on September recruitment, confirming that overall targets had been achieved and that numbers for international students slightly exceeded the target. Members discussed recruitment performance and the balance between international and home students, noting the implications for both the School's financial position and student experience. The Report was **NOTED.**

4.2 Finance Director's Report (TH)
Trevor Hall presented to the Board the financial performance for the twelve months to 31 July 2026. He advised that the year-end net operating result is £180k, approximately £100k lower than budget and outlined the main reasons for this, explaining that this had been offset in part by a previously advised donation.

He reported that the statutory result for the year is boosted by the continued recovery of the deficit on the School's defined pension scheme, which fell a further £1.0m to £63k. Members considered the details of this movement and its future impact.

He advised that the F&GP Committee has reviewed the financial position and projection of the School (including cash flow) and consider the School to be a going concern. They also considered that the carry value of the School's assets is correct and that no material assets have been impaired.

He reported that the year-end operating cash position to the end of July 2026 is approx. £2.4m lower than budget, which is primarily due to the £1.5m of monies deposited with Lloyds as security against the Grosvenor House bank guarantee and timings of monies due but received later than planned in August.

Following detailed consideration, members **NOTED** the report.

4.3 Student Union Report
Kathrine Wandall provided members with an update, reporting that four new student representatives had been appointed, with their first task supporting the School in the selection of the new Catering Contract.

She advised that the primary objective continues to be fostering a lively social community and supporting student-led clubs, and highlighted a number of summer events including a successful summer party, and outdoor screenings of the World Cup. For new students there was a programme of welcome activities including: Freshers' Fair, a Welcome Quiz and an induction speech centred on the concept of community.

She closed her report with forthcoming events and development in societies.

After discussion, 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, and the progress of the Research, Innovation and Knowledge Exchange Strategy. He advised that a cross-disciplinary group has been established and, at it's June meeting agreed the following priorities: undertaking a staff research

audit, documenting its findings and developing an Outputs framework. He noted that a fuller progress report has been prepared for the Academic Board.

He concluded his report, highlighting under curriculum development, the ten fully funded Creative Technology Scholarships in partnership with Amazon MGM, each year.

Following comprehensive discussion, the report was **NOTED.**

4.5 Annual Risk Register

Trevor Hall updated members on the latest assessment of the School's Risk Register, reminding members that it is scrutinised by the Audit Committee at each meeting.

He highlighted the current 'Red' high risks noting that risks related to expanding the Beaconsfield campus is expected to move to a lower rating as the project concludes. In contrast, Cyber Security will remain a high risk given the challenges and potential exposure. He also confirmed, consistent with earlier Audit Committee reporting, that AI will be added as a new risk category.

Wider discussions considered the challenges associated with Cyber Security with Trevor Hall outlining the actions, investment and future plans in place to strengthen the School's resilience.

The Risk Register was **Noted.**

4.6 Annual Review of Board Terms of Reference

The Chair informed members that in June 2026, the CUC reviewed and published a new, updated Code of Higher Education Governance, setting out the duties and responsibilities for governors and the Board. She asked all members to familiarise themselves with the new Code to ensure they fully understood their governor responsibilities and those of the Board.

The Clerk advised that the previous CUC Code, 2020 included a standalone, published Statement of Primary Responsibilities. The new Code does not yet; instead, the responsibilities are woven throughout the document and expressed through its principles, provisions and expectations.
In light of this, the Board Terms of Reference have been reviewed, and substantive updates are proposed to reflect the requirements of the new CUC Code of Governance, as set out in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2: Legal Duties of Trustees.

The Clerk confirmed that the new CUC Code is being reviewed against the School's current governance practice and would be brought back to the November Board meeting for members' consideration.

	Action: The Clerk to bring the outcome of the review of CUC Code of Higher Education Governance (June, 2026) together with proposed actions, to the November Board meeting After careful consideration, and points of clarification, the Board **APPROVED** the revised Terms of Reference.
5.	**ANY OTHER BUSINESS** The Chair closed the meeting by thanking Jon Lee, Staff Governor as this was his final meeting. She expressed appreciation for his contributions and insights during his term. John Lee thanked members in return, for their dedication, skills and commitment to the School. Jon Wardle outlined the staff election process and confirmed that a new Staff Governor is expected to join the Board at the November meeting.
6.	**DATE OF NEXT MEETING** Tuesday 24 November 2026, 10am, at the NFTS, Beaconsfield Studio, Station Road, Beaconsfield