

**MINUTES OF THE 227TH MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS
HELD ON TUESDAY 23RD SEPTEMBER 2025 AT NFTS BEACONSFIELD**

Present: Sophie Turner Laing (Chair), Paloma Baeza, Julian Bellamy, Angus Blair, Polly Cochrane, Geoffrey Crossick, Scott Forrest, John Lee, Andrew McDonald, Pukar Mehta, Charlotte Moore, Laurent Samama, Caroline Silver, Jon Wardle, Adil Ray (Zoom), Hilary Strong (Zoom)

Apologies: Paul Clark, Cécile Frot-Coutaz, Patrick Fuller, Andy Harries, Kate Phillips

In attendance: Ijeoma Akigwe, Chris Bird, Stephen Louis, Sue Vertue, Gillian Carr, Trevor Hall, Mark Readman, Eleanor Wheal

Clerk: Karen Mitchell

Declarations of Interest: There were no new declarations

Chairs Welcome

The Chair opened the meeting with thanks to Jon Wardle, Trevor Hall and the team for their work to progress the expansion of the Beaconsfield Campus. She also thanked the governors who have joined the Expansion Development Committee.

The Chair announced two appointments to the Board of Governors, Kate Phillips, BBC's Chief Content Officer and Farhana Bhula, Head of Film 4. Both will be joining the Strategy Day in October.

The Chair also advised the Board that former governor Ollie Madden has now joined the Creative Industries Liaison Group (CILG).

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting

1.1 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the previous Board of Governors meeting held on 24th June 2025 were approved as an accurate record.

1.2 Matters arising

The Chair reminded members to complete the Company House Identification Verification for November. She advised members to take a photograph of the code as it is not emailed, and to send the code to Trevor Hall who will recirculate the link and process for completing to members.

1.3 1.3 actions

All actions completed or on the agenda.

2. Strategy

2.1 Update on Expanding Beaconsfield Campus

Jon Wardle presented an update on the expansion of the Beaconsfield Campus with the good news that the DCMS letter has been signed and receipt of funding is expected this week. He explained the other elements for proof of funding for the vendor required by the end of September.

Trevor Hall explained the position with Lloyds bank and guarantee of funds, which is close to completion but requires the formal Board resolution that the facility has been approved. The Board unanimously agreed the facility.

RESOLVED:

that an uncommitted General Export Finance facility up to a principal sum of £7,000,000 (the “Facility”) be arranged with Lloyds Bank plc (the “Bank”) and that the offer of such Facility made by the Bank in a letter dated 17 September 2025 (the “Facility Letter”) be accepted and that Jon Wardle and Trevor Hall be authorised to make the necessary arrangements with the Bank and to sign on behalf of the School the Facility Letter which was produced to the meeting and its terms and conditions approved.

Jon Wardle presented to members the project one-page budget. He explained the different stages and the funding for each, confirming stage 1 *Prelim* is complete. He explained the stage 2 *Build* is the focus of fundraising for this stage with the aim of closing this by Christmas. This covers the purchase and construction but not equipping the new build. He outlined the plans for stage 3 *Equip and fit-out* providing assurance to members that there are contingency plans in place to mitigate the risks associated with further fundraising. Discussions took place on the contingency for the build, with Jon Wardle reminding members that the build is for a fixed price, and changes would be monitored closely by the project management team.

Jon Wardle provided a fundraising and key prospects progress update outlining applications to Trusts and Foundations with decisions expected imminently. He updated members on new funds that had been committed since the last Board meeting and ongoing conversations with potential sponsors. He also advised the Board that the School has now committed to a name for the new building which will be announced later this year.

The significant efforts from members with fundraising was recognised and members were invited to review their industry contacts to support further fundraising.

The report was **noted**.

2.2 Strategy Day Planning

The Chair and Jon Wardle set out the proposed agenda for the Board Strategy afternoon on 22nd October. Comments and alternative suggestions were sought from members, who confirmed they were content with the topics. Members provided suggestions for expert speakers. Jon Wardle advised members that reading material would be circulated prior to the day and welcomed suggestions for articles.

The agenda was **noted**.

2.3 Report on 2025 Staff Survey

Gillian Carr presented the results of the 2025 Staff Survey. This year saw the highest engagement of staff at 83%. She outlined key observations from the survey with 95% of staff proud to work at the NFTS and 90% of staff recommending NFTS as a great place to work. The majority of results had remained similar to previous years with new additional questions on well-being showing positive responses. Actions for moving forward include: continuing to support managers with improvements in communication; staff engagement with the corporate plan and progress; and further offerings in well-being for staff. The Board congratulated the School on the positive results.

The report was **noted**.

2.4 2024/25 Key Performance Indicators

Trevor Hall reported on performance against the School's Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) for 2024/25 noting that the majority are on or above target. He highlighted the positive results for recruitment at the NFTS hubs and the increase in students joining the School from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Members discussed the 'Shaping Future Storytelling' KPI as an area that fell slightly short of target and planned actions to improve results. There was a comprehensive discussion on the impact of the challenging industry employment market following the US writer's strike and its impact on graduate employment. Despite the challenging environment, Jon Wardle highlighted to members that the School's graduate employment figures were still significantly higher than current employment rates in the sector.

Geoff Crossick informed the Board that there are OfS changes under consultation and that graduate employment may become a measurement as part of the Teaching Excellence Framework.

Following discussion, members were invited to support the development of internal processes to capture and monitor graduate progression and employment information.

The Report was **noted**.

3. Updates from Committees

3.1 Minutes from Audit Committee

Caroline Silver presented the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 9th September 2025. She highlighted the satisfactory assurance from the recent Business Continuity Internal Audit. The Audit Committee also reviewed and recommend the approval of the revised Internal Audit Charter (see 4.11). She advised members that as part of safeguarding, whistleblowing policies and procedures would be reviewed at the next Audit Committee.

The Report was **noted**.

3.2 Minutes from F&GP

Laurent Samama presented the minutes held on Tuesday 9th September 2025. He advised members that F&GP are recommending the approval to extend the lease of Golden Square for a further four years. He provided assurance to the Board that the School is a Going Concern and that no assets of the School required impairment. The F&GP Committee had also reviewed and approved the Scheme of Delegation, subject to minor drafting changes.

John Wardle requested that the Board approve delegated authority to the Expansion Development Committee to sign off:

- a) All matters relating to planning and design now that the fixed price contract had been agreed
- b) All expenditure within the agreed budget for Stage 2: build and Stage 3: equip & fit out as long as they fall within the agreed budgets for these stages
- c) Anything outside the budget (i.e the Stage 4: contingency budget) up to £100k for individual elements, and up to £1m in total

Following comprehensive discussion, it was

RESOLVED:

To approve delegated authority for the Expansion Development Committee to sign off

- **All matters relating to planning and design**
- **All expenditure within the agreed budget for Stage 2 and Stage 3**
- **Anything outside the budget (Stage 4: contingency) up to £100k for individual elements, up to £1m in total.**

The F&GP Report was **noted**.

3.3 Minutes from Academic Standards Committee

Eleanor Wheal reminded the Board that the minutes being included with the Board papers is a response to the recent Academic Governance Review recommendations. She highlighted the Committee had reviewed academic governance recommendations and the actions to implement them. The annual assurance report will be on the Board agenda for November.

The Report was **noted**.

3.4 Report from Creative Industries Liaison Committee (CILG)

Sue Vertue presented the report from the Creative Industries Liaison Group held on Tuesday 9th September 2025. She highlighted the launch plan for the Alumni Connect Scheme initiative and discussions on curriculum developments.

The Report was **noted**.

3.5 Draft Minutes from the Expansion Development Committee

This was covered in 2.1.

4. Reports

4.1 Directors Report

Jon Wardle reported on his activities since the last meeting. He reported that the inaugural films of the Sean Connery Talent Lab had been successfully premiered at the Edinburgh International Film Festival in August, chaired by Andrew McDonald.

He drew attention to challenges with Chiltern Railways and the planned withdrawal of the bespoke discounts as rail providers are brought back into public ownership. The School has negotiated a staggered reduction but it will still increase travel costs significantly for students and staff. The Management team is considering how the hardship fund can be used to support those most affected.

He reported that nominations will be invited from NFTS staff, students and members for the NFTS Honorary Fellowship and explained the criteria and selection process.

Jon Wardle invited members to the launch of the new Graduate Impact Report to be held at the London Film Festival on October 7th 2025.

After discussion the Report was **noted**.

4.2 Finance Directors Report

Trevor Hall provided an update on the financial performance for the 12 months to 31st July 2025, noting the surplus net operating result, which is lower than the forecast shared with members in June 2025. This is due primarily to additional bursaries awarded to support students.

He highlighted the performance of the closed pension defined benefit scheme which remains on track to recover the funding deficit on the Scheme by the planned date.

He informed members of the renegotiation to the extend the lease with the Film and Television Charity (FTC) at Golden Square. A small increase annually has been agreed for a further 4 years.

Following discussion, it was:

RESOLVED:

To approve extending the lease for Golden Square

The financial performance for the last 12 months to 31st July 2025 and Report was **noted**.

4.3 Student Union Report

Angus Blair presented the Student Union activities since the last meeting, including the end of term Festival and screenings activities. He reported on the September Springboard new initiative for new students to help them integrate into the community, which had been well received, and there were plans to repeat them in January 2026. He referred to student feedback received in connection with the Mental Health Charter application and which would be discussed at the October Strategy Day.

Following discussions the Report was **noted**.

4.4 Curriculum and Short Course Report

Mark Readman presented his report on key curriculum activity since the last meeting. He highlighted the significant curriculum development on MFA/MA programmes with 13 validated MFA's and all postgraduate diplomas changed to 1 year MA's. The remaining development is on the final four 2-year programmes to 1 year programme and new course development.

Jon Wardle informed the Board that Mark Readman would be leaving the School at Christmas. The Board thanked Mark for his contribution, recognising the significant legacy in the curriculum changes to MA's and MFA's.

Following discussion, the Board **noted** the Report.

4.5 Humanitarian Scholarship Report

Eleanor Wheal provided an update on the School's Humanitarian Scholarships. She explained the criteria and selection process, ways that the Scholarships are promoted and gave an update on applications.

After discussion the Board **noted** the report.

4.6 Annual Risk Register Report

Trevor Hall updated members on the latest assessment of the School's Risk Register explaining the revised risk register format takes a thematic approach and tracks risks under those headings. He advised that the register is a live document that is reviewed quarterly and at each Audit Committee. New specific risks for Cybersecurity and expanding the Beaconsfield Campus have been added for regular monitoring and review. Trevor Hall also addressed the helpful member comments.

The Board thanked Caroline Silver for supporting the development of the revised risk register with Trevor Hall. She suggested this could be a potential topic for next year's Strategy Day, looking at future emerging risks in depth as part of the strategic planning.

Following further discussion, the Report was **noted**.

4.7 Annual Health and Safety Report

Jon Wardle provided the Board with a summary overview on Health and Safety activity over the last 12 months. He drew attention to work that will be commencing once HE guidance has been received to comply with the Martin Law legislation for public space and emergency procedures to manage hostile intruders.

After discussion, including considerations for the new build, the Report was **noted**.

4.8 Annual Review of Board Terms of Reference

Trevor Hall presented the reviewed terms of Reference, with no changes proposed and noting minor drafting changes.

RESOLVED:

To approve the Board Terms of Reference subject to minor drafting amendments.

4.9 Annual Report of Compliance with OfS Conditions of Registration

Eleanor Wheal presented the annual report and confirmed the only change was to the E6 condition regarding incidents of harassment and/or sexual misconduct.

The Report and E6 condition was **noted**.

4.10 Updated B3 Student Outcomes

Eleanor Wheal presented the B3 Student Outcomes highlighting the strengths of the School against the set thresholds for MA's and Postgraduate Diplomas. The area of graduate employment has previously been discussed. Geoff Crossick raised the OfS consultation on proposed changes to the Teaching Excellence Framework which may be extended to include postgraduate courses and incorporate B3 outcomes into the Framework.

Following discussion, the Report was **noted**.

4.11 Internal Audit Revised Charter

Trevor Hall presented the changes within the revised Internal Audit Charter.

RESOLVED:

To approve the Internal Audit Revised Charter.

5. AOB

5.1 BoardEffect Update

The Clerk updated members on a new member's information area in the Board of Governors library section on BoardEffect.

The Chair thanked Chris Bird for his contributions to the Board and presented him with a gift.

6. Dates of Upcoming Meetings

Date of Next Board Meeting – 10.30am on Tuesday 25th November at NFTS, Beaconsfield

Date of Strategy Day – 1.30pm-8.30pm on Wednesday 22nd October in Central London (Left Bank Pictures, Clareville House, 26-27 Oxendon Street, Londo SW1Y 4EL

7. Board Briefing

7.1 Apprenticeships

Rachel Featherstone Smith and Megan Manly, Level 4 Junior Production Co-ordinators reflected on their experiences of being an apprentice, their learning at the School and their work placements.

Members were pleased to hear their positive experiences in industry and noted the link to assignments. The Board thanked them for an interesting presentation.