



NATIONAL  
FILM AND  
TELEVISION  
SCHOOL

**MINUTES OF THE 229<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS  
HELD ON TUESDAY 24<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2026 AT NFTS BEACONSFIELD**

**Present:** Sophie Turner Laing (Chair), Julian Bellamy, Farhana Bhula, Polly Cochrane, Paul Clark (Zoom), Geoffrey Crossick, Cécile Frot-Coutaz, Andy Harries, John Lee, Pukar Mehta, Charlotte Moore (Zoom), Kate Phillips, Adil Ray, Laurent Samama, Caroline Silver, Kathrin Wandall, Jon Wardle

**Apologies:** Andrew MacDonald, Paloma Baeza, Patrick Fuller, Scott Forrest, Stephen Louis, Sue Vertue

**In attendance:** Ijeoma Akigwe, Gillian Carr, Trevor Hall, Alan Thorn, Eleanor Wheel

**Clerk:** Karen Mitchell

**Declarations of Interest:** No new declarations of interest

	<p><b>Chair's Welcome</b></p> <p>Following a tour of the newly named The Cubby Broccoli Building, the Chair welcomed members to the meeting. She noted that this was the last meeting for Geoff Crossick, Adil Ray and Laurent Samama and advised their contributions would be recognised at the close of the meeting.</p> <p>The Chair welcome Kathrine Wandall to her first meeting as Student Union president.</p> <p>The Chair presented highlights from the previous day's successful building-name announcement events. She outlined the morning activities at the School, including the tour, the formal announcement and the placement of the time capsule. This was followed by a reception at the Foreign Office, hosted by the DCMS, which was very well attended by industry representatives and conveyed a strong sense of pride in the work of the NFTS. The event also demonstrated a key government policy priority for industry and government to work more closely together.</p> <p>The Board thanked Jon Wardle and the management team for organising the successful event.</p>
<p><b>1.</b></p>	<p><b>MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING</b></p> <p>1.1 <u>Minutes of the NFTS Board Meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2025</u> The minutes of the previous Board of Governors meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2025 were <b>APPROVED</b> as an accurate record.</p> <p>1.2 <u>Matters Arising</u> None.</p>

	<p>1.3 <u>Actions</u></p> <p>3.1 <b>Action:</b> Jon Wardle and Trevor Hall to circulate the breach of threshold plan (OfS minimum liquidity) to members. (see Agenda item 4.2).</p> <p>3.4 <b>Action:</b> Jon Wardle to write to Shaheen Baig and Jina Jay (NFTS Fellowship 2026) . Jon Wardle confirmed action completed.</p> <p>4.1 <b>Action:</b> Jon Wardle to bring an update on the funding risk from the planned <i>International Student Levy</i> to the Board meeting in February and June 2026 . Jon Wardle updated the Board that new information had confirmed this does not apply to institutions with under 250 international students and the School is well below this threshold.</p>
<p>2. <b>STRATEGY</b></p>	<p>2.1 <u>Update on Expanding Beaconsfield Studios</u></p> <p>Jon Wardle presented an update on the expansion of the Beaconsfield Campus. He highlighted developments in project finance and major donations, which have enabled the Stage 2 Build fundraising target to be achieved, a significant milestone. He noted that the remaining target is approximately £1.6m for Stage 3 (Equip and Fit Out), with the intention of closing this gap as soon as possible, while recognising that the formal target date is January 2027.</p> <p>Jon Wardle informed members that the design satisfaction condition had been met and construction remained on target, with a small number of variations totalling £23k being met from the contingency fund. He advised that a further variation is anticipated in relation to the lifts, which must be powered independently in the event of a fire, with an estimated additional cost of around £100k. He confirmed that the Expansion Development Committee continues to monitor this closely.</p> <p>The Board recognised that the funds required for Equipment and Fit Out relate primarily to kit, and discussed potential non-industry contacts who may be able to support this stage through <i>in-kind</i> contributions.</p> <p>It was agreed that Jon Wardle and Sophie Turner Laing would ask the Project Manager to compile a list of required equipment for members to share with their contacts.</p> <p><b>Action:</b>  <b>Jon Wardle to ask the Project Manager to compile a list of required equipment for members to share with their contacts.</b></p> <p>The report was <b>NOTED</b>.</p> <p>2.2 <u>Annual Student Survey 2025</u></p> <p>Alan Thorn was welcomed to his first meeting and presented his report on the Annual Student Survey 2025. He provided an overview, explaining that all MA, MFA and exiting Diploma Students were invited to complete the survey. A total of 379 students participated, giving a response rate of 79%.</p>

	<p>He advised that overall satisfaction levels remain high and stable across all four key performance indicators with comparative data (2023-25) showing consistently strong results with most measures at or above 85% and several exceeding 90%.</p> <p>Alan Thorn highlighted areas where there was a difference of 5% or more. Organisation and Management had a 6% increase and he explained the actions that had a positive impact. Teaching Support dropped by 5% to 83%, and this was attributed to a limited number of courses. He advised on actions that are in progress to address the feedback including providing refresher training for tutors on clarity of expectations and communications to ensure students feel supported and developing a simple 'What to Expect This Term' document template for courses to use with students.</p> <p>He noted that whilst still high, the Professionalism key measure results had dropped by 1-2%, and this was due to anxieties, real and perceived, regarding careers and jobs into the industry with the actions being taken to address this. Members discussed the support that could be provided by those practitioner governors on the Board. Jon Wardle advised on the positive interest from agents for the Grad Show next week.</p> <p>The report was <b>NOTED</b>.</p> <p><b>2.3 Strategy Day – Scotland September 21<sup>st</sup> 2026</b></p> <p>Sophie Turner Laing confirmed the dates for the next Board Strategy Day, which will be held in Scotland with the September Board meeting taking place the following day. She updated members on her conversation with Screen Scotland, who would be delighted for any members to take part in additional activities. Members were invited to let the Chair know if they are interested.</p> <p>Jon Wardle and Sophie Turner Laing outlined the proposed activities and agenda for the sessions, including an offer of a studio tour and a focus on upside/downside scenario planning and Games. Members discussed additional potential topics such as AI in VFX. Sophie Turner Laing confirmed that all suggestions are warmly welcomed and asked members to share any proposed topics or speakers with Jon Wardle.</p>
<p><b>3.</b></p>	<p><b>UPDATES FROM COMMITTEES</b></p> <p><b>3.1 Minutes from the Audit Committee</b></p> <p>Caroline Silver presented the minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2026. She advised the Board on the outcome of two recent internal audits with CoStar receiving Substantial Assurance and no recommendations, and Data Quality: TRAC receiving Substantial Assurance and a minor recommendation. The Board congratulated Trevor Hall and the team on the excellent outcome.</p> <p>Other areas highlighted to the Board from the report included an update on internal audit progress, the Risk Register, and the Committee's intention to undertake deep dives into principal risks over time. The Board also noted that the Committee will consider at a future meeting whether Operational Resilience should be treated as a standalone principal risk or as a theme running across all risks.</p>

She concluded that there had been no GDPR issues reported, safeguarding procedures remained strong, the Mental Health Charter accreditation submission was progressing well, and the US Federal Loan Audit had received a clean opinion. She added that apprenticeships continued to progress positively, and the Committee had proposed including the Apprenticeship Strategy as an agenda item for the Strategy Day.

The report was **NOTED**.

### 3.2 Minutes from F&GP Committee (LS)

Laurent Samama presented the minutes of the F&GP Committee meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2026. He advised that the Committee had reviewed the financial performance, which was slightly behind target and discussed in detail the reasons for this, and assured the Board that there were no concerns at this point. Trevor Hall will present the Board with an update in his report (4.2).

He advised members that following comprehensive discussion at the meeting on contract renewals, the Committee is recommending approval of Howden's as the new insurance provider, and the retention of Brayborne Facilities Services as the School's cleaning services provider.

He advised the Board on a detailed discussion regarding a new initiative with the Saudi Film Commission. Following this, the Committee concluded that it did not need to be reviewed at this Board meeting and he explained the rationale for this decision.

Laurent Samama advised members on the ongoing funding position and viability of the Inside Pictures programme currently delivered by the School. Jon Wardle confirmed that the risk for this programme was raised in his last Board report. He updated members on the current position and confirmed that he had not received the funding to deliver the programme in 2026. Jon Wardle advised members that he is exploring with European partners the potential to take the programme forward from 2027 onwards.

Laurent Samama took the Board through the Health and Safety report, noting there had been no reportable incidents. He noted the review of the School's Key performance Measures with most of these on target.

He concluded that the Committee had received an update on the Environmental Sustainability Plan, which Trevor Hall will present to the Board in his report (4.2) and congratulated the team on the progress.

Following member's discussion the report was **NOTED**.

### 3.3 GAR Committee Update – Recommendations for New Governor Appointments

Sophie Turner Laing explained that a search for two new governors with senior leadership higher education expertise to succeed Geoff Crossick (March 2026) and Patrick Fuller (November 2026) had been completed.

She informed members that the interview panel were proposing two candidates for approval, detailing the reasons. Following discussion,

	<p>It was <b>RESOLVED</b>:</p> <p><b>To appoint Professor John Vinney as governor to the NFTS Board of Governors from 22 March 2026, and as member of the F&amp;GP Committee, and to chair the extra-ordinary meeting of the Academic Board;</b></p> <p><b>To appoint Professor Susan Lea as governor to the NFTS Board of Governors from 21 November 2026, and as member to the Audit Committee</b></p> <p>Sophie Turner Laing reminded members that the Board has been holding a vacancy for a governor to represent disability. She outlined the work that had taken place with Charlotte Moore as part of this search and their proposal to appoint Ash Atalla as governor to the Board. Following discussion,</p> <p>It was <b>RESOLVED</b>:</p> <p><b>To appoint Ash Atalla as governor to the NFTS Board of Governors from 25 February 2026.</b></p> <p>3.4 <u>Minutes from Academic Standards Committee</u>  Eleanor Wheal highlighted from the minutes details of a complaint that the School was currently handling. She also advised the Board on six courses that had been approved in full and are now promoted on the website for 2027.</p> <p>The minutes were <b>NOTED</b>.</p> <p>3.5 <u>Draft minutes from the Expansion Development Committee</u>  It was agreed that this was covered in previous items and the minutes were <b>NOTED</b>.</p>
<p><b>4. REPORTS</b></p>	<p>4.1 <u>Director's Report</u>  Jon Wardle updated members on his key activities since the last Board meeting. He reported on the student recruitment position for 2026, noting that numbers are currently slightly below target, primarily due to lower enrolment on online certificate courses and fewer international students than budgeted.</p> <p>Members discussed the impact of this and the importance of international students in supporting a diverse learning experience. Jon Wardle outlined the budget challenge associated with the balance of international and home students, emphasising that the priority remains the recruitment of the best candidates. The Board asked 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.</p> <p><b>Action:</b>  <b>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</b></p>

Jon Wardle updated members on the outcome of the School's nomination for the BAFTA for the Best Short Film for *Welcome Home, Freckles* which had not won. Members applauded the nomination and the quality of the storytelling and film making. Jon Wardle also informed members that the School has two out of sixteen films being shown in the student section of the Cannes Film Festival.

He concluded his report with an update on the Gala 2026, which will take place on 15 June 2026 at Old Billingsgate.

The Report was **NOTED**

#### 4.2 Finance Director's Report

Trevor Hall presented to the Board the financial performance for the five months to 31 December 2025. He advised members that the net operating results to the end of December were slightly behind budget. This was due primarily to clawback on Creative Scotland grant funding for 2023/24 following audit. A prudent view has been taken for any similar overclaim for the 2024/25 grant funding pending audit.

Trevor Hall advised members on the cash position and two key items impacting on this including the previously reported £1.25m NFTS free cash-flow deposited with Lloyds Bank as security against the Grosvenor House bank guarantee. He also advised members that following discussions Lloyds Bank have approved that the NFTS free cash-flow monies may be released from Grosvenor House account should it be required for short-term operating purposes.

Trevor Hall took the Board through the positive actions identified to balance the previously reported negatives and overall, the School remains on target to deliver its forecast for 2025/26.

Trevor Hall presented members with the procurement recommendations for the School's insurance and cleaning contracts.

Following comprehensive discussion, it was **RESOLVED**

**To appoint Howden Insurance as the School new insurance broker;**

**To appoint the retention of Brayborne Facilities as the School's cleaning services provider on a recurrent annual renewal basis.**

Trevor Hall concluded his report, informing members that in November 2025, the Carbon Trust was re-engaged to: confirm the School's current carbon emissions and confirmed this had fallen by 62% against the 2019 baseline; to calculate the School's new baseline for 2026 which would now include scope 3 emissions; and support the School to develop a new carbon reduction plan to 2030. He advised that the new carbon reduction plan to 2030 will be presented to the June Board meeting for approval.

The Report was **NOTED**.

#### 4.3 Student Union Report

Kathrine Wandall presented her first report as Student Union President to the Board highlighting her focus for the following year, which would build on Angus Blair's previous year's work on engaging students socially.

She explained her intention to increase the number of events and early support for students to take responsibility for creating communities and establishing societies. There have been a number of early term events, which have been well attended.

She highlighted other areas for the year ahead, which include improving accessibility and communication, strengthening 'third spaces', supporting challenging collaborations and engaging the local community.

Members welcomed the report and plans for the year ahead, recognising the positive impact of the Student Union activities on mental well-being, especially given the pressures of the courses. Members invited Kathrine Wandall to discuss "how students are feeling" at the June Board meeting.

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, the launch of the MA Animation for Film and Games, and highlighting six new/restructured MA course listings for January 2027 entry. Members were particularly interested in the new MA in Developing and Producing for Unscripted Formats, commenting that this was a growth area in the Industry.

Alan Thorn highlighted that during 2025 many two-year MA courses transitioned to two-year MFA awards. All current students were offered the opportunity to top up their MA to MFA. He reported that 117 out of 156 students (75%) elected to upgrade. Members discussed the reasons why some courses were higher than others, noting the perception of some students on certain courses that the MA was a better option for securing employment.

Following discussion the report was **NOTED**

#### 4.5 Annual Diversity Report 2025 (Students)

Eleanor Wheal presented the Board with information on the demographics of the 2025 student intake for Masters, full time Diploma and Certificate courses, and the trends across the last five years where the data is available in respect of ethnicity, gender, disability status, and socio-economic background.

Eleanor Wheal highlighted that for disability, the School currently exceeds the industry target and the national average for students on Master and Diploma courses.

She outlined the progress the School is making in terms of socio-economic background, with data showing that the percentage of students from low socio-

	<p>economic had increased, and has continued to increase further for new admissions in January 2026.</p> <p>In terms of ethnic diversity, she reported that the percentage of <i>UK-domiciled entrants</i> on the Master’s course had decreased, while remaining static on Diploma courses. She noted that the data indicated a dip in 2025 that was not consistent with other years, and that figures had returned to previous levels for January 2026 admissions.</p> <p>She reported that female representation on Master’s and Diploma courses had decreased from the previous year. Members discussed the report and considered ways in which the Board could offer support, including through connections with female directors, given the recent decline in female representation on this course.</p> <p><b>Action:</b>  <b>CILG to include on the next meeting agenda connections with female directors, given the recent decline in female representation on this course.</b></p> <p>The Report was <b>NOTED</b></p> <p>4.6 <u>Annual Diversity Report 2025 (Staff)</u>  Gillian Carr shared the annual report on Diversity and Inclusion 2025 (Staff). She highlighted key points, reporting that the ethnic diversity of visiting tutors had reduced by 1% from the previous year but remained static for permanent staff.</p> <p>In terms of disability, staff who disclosed a disability has continued to increase for permanent staff and visiting tutors and Gillian Carr noted the excellent work of the School’s Disability Lead with students and staff, and who has been nominated at the Sope Awards in the Workplace Champion category. The gender balance of staff remains fairly static with 53% female and 47% male.</p> <p>Members discussed improving the diversity of visiting tutors and offered to provide potential names to Jon Wardle. Further conversations focused on the staff application process, noting the disparity in diversity in some areas between application, shortlisting and appointment. Gillian Carr confirmed that she will review the process at each stage.</p> <p><b>Action:</b>  <b>All practitioner Board members to send Jon Wardle at least 5 suggestions for potential visiting tutors from ethnically diverse backgrounds.</b></p> <p>Following comprehensive discussion the Report was <b>NOTED</b>.</p>
<p><b>5. AOB</b></p>	<p>5.1 <u>Governance Effectiveness Review Report and Recommendations</u>  Sophie Turner Laing presented the outcome and recommendations from the recent Governance Effective Review carried out by Advance HE. She reported that overall the NFTS demonstrates highly effective governance. The key strengths from the report included: a high calibre Board, a highly regarded Chair, excellent secretariat support, strong academic governance, effective committee structure and high engagement.</p>

	<p>The Review made some recommendations, but recognised these had been identified by the Board with actions planned or in progress. Sophie Turner Laing gave an update on the actions including reminding members that the Board Deputy Chairs are the Chair of Audit and the Chair of F&amp;GP.</p> <p>She reported that the succession planning for HE leadership and quality/standards expertise had been addressed through the appointments of the new governors, and scenario planning will form part of the forthcoming Strategy Day. She encouraged all governors to attend the annual special Academic Board meeting.</p> <p>Eleanor Wheal advised that one of the recommendations was to rename the Academic and Standards Committee to Academic Board, which requires approval from the Board.</p> <p>It was <b>NOTED</b> that:</p> <p>5.1.1 The School’s Articles of Association at Article 32 required the Governors to establish and maintain a committee of the Board responsible for the management of the academic activities of the School.</p> <p>5.1.2 The Committee was currently called the “Academic Standards Committee”</p> <p>5.1.3 The School’s Articles allowed the Governors to change the name of the Committee from time to Time</p> <p>5.1.4 It was further <b>NOTED</b> that the School had recently undergone an independent governance review and one of the recommendations was that the Academic Standards Committee be renamed the “Academic Board”</p> <p>It was <b>RESOLVED</b> that the name of the “Academic Standards Committee” be changed to “Academic Board” with immediate effect.</p> <p><b>Close of Meeting</b></p> <p>The meeting closed with tributes and thanks to Geoff Crossick, Adil Ray and Laurent Samama for their significant contributions and support over the last nine years as governors to the Board and its Committees. Each was presented with a gift and warm wishes for the future.</p>
	<p><b>Date of Next Meeting:</b>  <b>Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2026 at 10.00, NFTS, Beaconsfield</b></p>
<p><b>6.</b></p>	<p><b>Board Briefing</b></p> <p>6.1 <u>Screen Writing</u></p> <p>Maddie Haynes, second year Screenwriting student reflected on her studies, her journey and future ambitions. Members were pleased to hear about her experiences and the impact her course and the NFTS has had on the development of her skills and work. The Board thanked her for sharing her student experience and wished her well in her continued studies and ambitions for the future.</p>