

NATIONAL ARMY MUSEUM COUNCIL

**Minutes of the 189th Meeting of the NAM Council at 10.00hrs – 12.30hrs
on Wednesday 29th July 2025 in the Boardroom at the NAM Chelsea**

Present: Lieutenant-General Sir Simon Mayall (Chair), Lieutenant-General Sir George Norton (Deputy Chair), Mr Tim Cooke (Zoom), Mr Neil Johnson, Mr Paul Davies (Zoom), Mr Chris Finney GC, Prof. Ali Ansari, Dr Paul Schreier, Prof. Helen Parr, Mrs Sue Mckenzie.

In Attendance: Brigadier Justin Maciejewski (Director, National Army Museum), Mr Mike O'Connor (Deputy Director, National Army Museum), Mrs Manuela McDermid (Minutes), Ms Rachel Hick (Deputy Director/Head Finance (Army)), Mr Chris Horner (Chair, Members Advisory Group), Mr Richard Hughes (Legal Advisor), Dr James Naylor (Chair, NAMTL Board).

Apologies: Lord Roberts of Belgravia

Item 1. Council Administration

Item 1.1 Chairman's Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed everyone, including Ms Rachel Hick and Dr James Naylor for their first meeting.

Item 1.2 Register of Members' Interests

The Register was made available in accordance with Charity Commission advice and no amends or additions were made.

Item 1.3 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were made from HRH the Duke of Kent and Lord Roberts.

Item 1.4 Minutes of the Previous Meeting & Matters Arising

The minutes were approved as a true record.

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Item 2. Director's Update

2.1 Performance Update at 31 March 2025

Museum Update: The Director presented his dashboard to the Council. Preparations for the audit are underway with accounts due in November.

Learning and Research: School visits are growing strongly at 10%, and live online sessions beyond London are thriving. Visitor numbers to the study centre remain low but are made up of high-value users such as historians and PhD researchers.

Onsite Visitors: Overall footfall has increased by 1%, achieved through considerable effort, while digital footfall has dropped by 56% due to changes in cookie laws, limiting website analytics.

Digital Engagement: The Director highlighted that the rise of AI means fewer visitors are accessing content via the NAM website, though engagement with collections has risen and is trackable.

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Trading: NAMTL has made solid progress in a challenging environment, with venue hire, birthday parties, and retail income helping to offset pressures. Play Base attendance has fallen by 22%, which is thought to be due to increased competition.

People: There has been a significant increase in recruitment of volunteers, student summer placements, and interim roles.

Sponsor Update: Brigadier Nick Doyle, (Head Arms and Services) provided an update focusing on the Strategic Defence Review. Ms Hick gave an overview of Army finances and defence reform.

2.2 Regimental Museum Review: Brigadier Doyle commissioned a piece of work from NAM on behalf of the Army Heritage Committee to assess the current plan for reductions in funding for Regimental Museums. The review of all affected museums has been completed, with the Committee set to consider the findings later in the year.

2.3 Project Oscar (Collaboration & Development Agreement): The vision for the development was presented to the Board.

2.4 Project Valour: The Director shared an update on Project Valour.

2.5 HUNSYS-25: The IP design is complete, and the Hungarian Government is converting it into a European tender document in Hungarian, with local support being secured.

2.6 Chelsea Heritage Quarter: The collaboration will likely take the form of a CIC rather than a CIO. Plans are ongoing to establish formal status. The new Director of CHQ is charged with advancing the partnership's development in the coming years.

2.7 Armed Forces Covenant: NAM is a Bronze Award holder of the Employer Recognition Scheme but has submitted an application for an upgrade to the Silver Award

2.8 Council Bylaws: There was discussion of the continuing usage of the term "Chairman". The term is written into the Royal Charter. The Legal Advisor suggested continuing to use "Chair" in informal references. The updated Byelaws were approved.

Item 3. Updates from Sub-Committees & NAMTL

3.1 Development Committee

The Chair of the Development Committee reported that fundraising is performing well against the previous FY. Income has increased year-on-year. This has included unrestricted donations, as well as funding for Research Fellows and Collections acquisitions. Grant funding was secured from the Art Fund and Veteran's Fund. A major bequest is also in process.

3.2 Enterprise Committee/NAMTL Board

The Chair of the NAMTL Board reported that business is performing well overall, except for Play Base, which requires further attention. There was a discussion on maximising venue hire with potential alternative uses for the space, such as event hires, training, and corporate learning activities. The Chair recommended developing a campaign plan for events, with a progress update expected in November.

3.3 Performance, Audit and Risk Assurance

The Chair of PA&RA noted that the cash balance on the balance sheet is reducing, although this

is not an immediate concern. The Board agreed to review the cash flow forecast and examine cash movement retrospectively to gain better visibility. An annual investment review from Dolphin was presented and received positively. The internal audit report was reviewed which included assessments of GDPR and PR and Marketing, with final reports expected for Cyber Security and Current Policies and Procedures. Ten policies had been reviewed and confirmed to be up to date.

3.4 Collections & Research

The Chair of the Collections and Research Committee reported that a Collections security audit had been conducted to ensure appropriate measures are in place, and this had produced the necessary assurances. The Director highlighted the acquisition of a rare painting depicting a bandsman and Waterloo veteran, circa 1820s.

3.5 People & Appointments Committee

A revised dress code has been approved and implemented. Efforts are underway to improve and develop team leader training across the staff.

Item 4. Finance Summaries to 31st March 2025

4.1 Variance Report as at 31 March 2025

The Deputy Director reported that last year was challenging for the Museum. NAMTL as a business is performing reasonably well. Overall, the NAM remains in a stable position.

Item 5. Health and Safety Report as of 31 March 2025

The Deputy Director reported no injuries or accidents.

Item 6. Any Other Business

The Director outlined plans for the Deputy Director's retirement at the end of November.

The Deputy Director highlighted an ongoing issue with the environmental control system in the building. Due to an apparent design error, the climate control in the temporary exhibition gallery cannot be fully controlled. The Museum is pursuing indemnity insurance claims but has yet to receive clear answers. The PA&RA Committee has requested that the Deputy Director report back to the Council in November.

The Director also noted that he will reduce his working days from five to four per week to assist the Museum.

6.1 Cobseo Briefing – Lt Gen Sir Nick Pope KCB CBE, Chair of Cobseo

The Confederation of Service Charities (Cobseo) is experiencing a changing strategic landscape, with membership now exceeding 900 organisations. It was noted that the current clusters do not include heritage organisations. Further discussions on establishing a heritage cluster are planned.

6.2 Council Appraisal

The Chair of Council will arrange 20-minute conversations with each member to discuss their Annual Appraisal in line with sponsor direction.

There was no other business, and the Chair closed the meeting.