



## HISTORIC ROYAL PALACES

### Minutes

**Meeting name:** HRP Trustees Board

**Time and date:** 9am – 12.30pm, 28 January 2026

**Location:** Kensington Palace

**Attendees:** Nicholas Coleridge - Chair (NC), Jonathan Bewes (JBe), Lisa Burger (LB), Camilla Finlay (CF), Tom Harris (TH), Caroline Hope (CH), Caroline Michel (CM), Dan Jones (DJ), Tim Knox (TK) (items 1- 4.8), Gordon Messenger (GM), John Mothersole (JM)

**In attendance:** John Barnes (JB), Nicola Andrews (NA), Jane Crowther (JC), Anupam Ganguli (AG), Andrew Jackson (AJ), Antonia Newman (AN), Tom O’Leary (TO’L), Dan Wolfe (DW), Melissa Hamnett (MH), Stephen Corri (SC), Emma Marley (EM). Alison Lightbown (AL) and Kim Klug (KK) attended for item 3.3 And Aileen Pierce (AP) attended for item 3.4.

**Apologies:** James Chalmers

#### 1. Opening Business

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed Caroline Hope to her first Board meeting as a Trustee, and Melissa Hamnett who had joined as Director of Palaces and Collections.
- 1.2 No conflicts of interest were recorded.
- 1.3 The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as a correct record subject to an amendment to reflect the attendance of CM.
- 1.4 The Board noted that actions arising from the previous meeting had been addressed or were include on the agenda for this meeting.

#### 2. Monitoring Performance

##### 2.1 Chief Executive’s Updates

The Board had received the Chief Executive’s updates for October to November 2025, noting the very impressive range of activity across the palaces in support of HRP’s strategy. In discussion Trustees noted:

- The CEO's update had been reconfigured to reflect the six key changes which formed the foundation of HRP's new strategy.
- The engagement with the *Purpose Coalition* and how this was enabling younger voices to inform our thinking and our plans.
- The continuing success of HRP's apprenticeships scheme which was now in its second year.
- Introduction of HRP's new leadership development programme.
- An update on international and domestic visitor trends and how this was being reflected in HRP's planning and thinking, noting that the Board would be provided with a further update at its April meeting.
- The ongoing success of HRP's development programme in securing funds for major strategic initiatives and capital projects.
- Congratulations to the team on the development of the *Inspiring Teachers* programme.
- Enthusiastic support for the *pop-up-palaces* initiative and the scope for this to transform HRP's national outreach.
- Support for an emerging partnership opportunity.

## 2.2 **Management Accounts**

The Board received and noted management accounts to December as well as a verbal update on the current position.

## 3. **Main items**

### 3.1 **Operating Plan and Budget 2026-29**

The Board received the operating plan and budget for 2026-29, noting that the Finance & Investment Committee had already reviewed the proposals in detail. In discussion the following points were noted:

- The ongoing challenge of delivering planned major projects on time and budget given the complexity of the sites and the range of stakeholders who were necessarily engaged in the process

- The importance of maintaining the quality of the visitor experience throughout major project work, and of good communication to put the work in context for visitors, and the need for effective sequencing of building projects to minimise disruption.
- The need for continued caution on headcount and expenses given an uncertain economic climate.
- The ongoing development of our metrics and dashboard which would be brought to a future meeting.

The Board approved the plan and budget for 2026-29.

### **3.2 Update on the HRP Campaign Board**

The Board received a paper and a verbal update from JBe on recent developments with the Campaign Board and noted successes to date in support of HRP's fundraising efforts. The Board would be kept updated on further developments.

### **3.3 Communities outreach at Kensington**

The Board received a presentation on the communities outreach programme at Kensington Palace, noting that as well as being central to a very effective education programme the Clore Centre was a valued hub for a wide range of local community groups who worked with us to help co-create a programme of events aligned with our new strategic charitable ambitions.

### **3.4 *Last Princesses of Punjab* exhibition**

The Board received an update on plans for the upcoming *Last Princesses of the Punjab* exhibition which would open on 26 March at Kensington Palace. Trustees were pleased to note the ambition to continue to engage new audiences with our work and the adoption of an innovative approach which would see the exhibition including intimate objects from personal collections, musical and artistic commissions and oral histories.

## **4. Items for approval**

### **4.1 Catering tender**

The Board approved the recommendation in respect of the catering tender, noting that the process had been reviewed by the Audit & Risk Committee.

### **4.2 Electrical upgrades, Tower of London**

The Board approved the recommendation in respect of proposed electrical upgrades at the Tower of London.

#### **4.3 Middle Tower entry investment**

The Board considered a proposal in respect of work on Middle Tower at the Tower of London and agreed to approve the proposal in principle but noted that further work would be undertaken and the proposal considered again by email in the coming weeks before work could commence.

#### **4.4 Major gift**

The Board ratified the decision it had made by email in respect of a major gift.

#### **4.5 Digital Video Guide investment**

The Board ratified the decision it had made by email in respect of a proposed investment in digital video guides.

#### **4.6 Winter Palace investment**

The Board ratified the decision it had made by email in respect of investment in the Winter Palace proposal.

#### **4.7 Croydon Warehouse rent review**

The Board ratified the decision it had made by email in respect of the rent review at the Croydon warehouse.

### **5. Governance Matters**

#### **5.1 Chair's annual appraisal**

LB, in her capacity as Senior Independent Director, thanked Trustees for the contributions to the Chair appraisal process, noting the range of very positive feedback. Further reflections would be captured as part of the upcoming Board effectiveness review and discussed at a future Board meeting.

#### **5.2 Annual Board effectiveness review**

Trustees noted that the annual Board effectiveness review would be launched in the coming weeks.

#### **5.3 Summary of key discussions**

The Board noted a summary of key discussions from the various working groups meetings since the last Board meeting.