



Dame Diane Lees to step down as Imperial War Museums' Director-General



© *Ella Pellegrini IWM* Dame Diane Lees pictured in the Second World War and The Holocaust Galleries at IWM London

Today, Imperial War Museums (IWM) announced that Dame Diane Lees will be stepping down as Director-General on 31 March 2023.

Diane Lees joined IWM in 2008 and became the Museums' first female Director-General since it was founded in 1917. Over the course of her fourteen-year leadership, she has led IWM through one of the most transformative periods in its 105-year history, redeveloping its branches through more than £90 million of fundraising and investment.

With support from IWM's Board of Trustees, Executive Leadership Team, staff and donors, Diane Lees has driven IWM's mission through its branches, collection, programming, and partnerships. She placed IWM at the forefront of the nation's First World War Centenary Commemorations with the opening of IWM London's groundbreaking First World War Galleries in 2014 and the co-commissioning of Peter Jackson's critically acclaimed documentary, *They Shall Not Grow Old*. She led the redevelopment of IWM Duxford's American Air Museum in 2016 and the recent completion of IWM London's award-winning Second World War and The Holocaust Galleries in 2021.

Throughout her term, Diane Lees has assisted organisations across the world on the subject of war and conflict, including establishing IWM's First World War Centenary Partnership and The Subject Specialist Network which have brought together thousands of organisations and millions of people globally.

Diane Lees was awarded a CBE in the Queen's New Year's Honours list in January 2015 and a DBE in the Queen's New Year's Honours list in January 2022 for services to museums.

Diane Lees, Director-General said: "It has been an honour to serve as Imperial War Museums' Director-General. Over the past fourteen years I have had the privilege of growing and transforming the organisation, most recently with the opening of the new Second World War and The Holocaust Galleries. The Museum, and the sector more generally, have undergone huge change since I began in 2008 and I feel proud to have been at the helm throughout this significant period. I have had the privilege to have worked with so many incredible IWM staff, Trustees, partners, veterans and Holocaust survivors, who have made being Director-General a rewarding and extraordinary experience."

Matthew Westerman, Chairman of IWM's Board of Trustees said: "On behalf of the Board of Trustees, as well as my predecessors as Chair, who have worked so closely with Di over the last fourteen years, I thank Di for her extraordinary service to IWM. She has built on the work of those that preceded her and led the Museum with distinction, working with her leadership teams, staff and volunteers to transform the Museum into the institution that it is today. Her tenure has coincided with good and bad times, most notably the Global Financial Crisis and the Pandemic and throughout, the Museum has stayed true to its mission. Di has led the team from the front in making the Museum such a compelling place to visit both physically and digitally and we are very grateful for the support we continue to receive from our sponsors and donors as well as our excellent relationship with the Department of Digital, Culture, Media & Sport.

We look forward to appointing her successor to build on her achievements and to position the Museum for its next exciting period of development."

Diane Lees will continue her role as Pro-Chancellor and Chair of the University of Lincoln's Board of Governors as well as several other non-executive positions.

The recruitment of Imperial War Museums' new Director-General will begin immediately and will be guided by IWM's Board of Trustees, with the formal appointment made by the Prime Minister.

Ends

For further press information and interview requests please contact:

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Notes to editors

Biography, Dame Diane Lees

Since October 2008, Diane Lees has served as Director-General of the Imperial War Museums.

Diane Lees began her career as an historic buildings researcher and then moved into exhibitions, education and interpretation. She has worked on some of the most challenging and exciting projects in the country, including the rescue and relocation of a hat block manufacturer's workshop in central Manchester, the recovery and display of the Mary Rose flagship in Portsmouth Harbour and the redisplay of the Nelson Galleries at the Royal Naval Museum. She project-managed the creation of the UK standard for the recording of information about museum collections (SPECTRUM) and was responsible for the creation of the only museum of law in the country, the multi-award-winning Galleries of Justice in Nottingham.

She is a Trustee of the IWM Development Trust and The Gerry Holdsworth Special Forces Trust. She serves as Vice President of the American Air Museum in Britain, is a member of the Women Leaders in Museums Network (WLMN) and from April 2013 to March 2017 chaired the National Museum Directors' Council (NMDC). She sits on the judging panels of the Museums + Heritage Awards and the 2022 Art Fund Museum of the Year. She is also a member of the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust's Experts' Reference Group and the DCMS Cultural and Heritage Capital Advisory Board. Since April 2018 she has been Pro-Chancellor and Chair of the University of Lincoln's Board of Governors. She is a member of the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths and a Freeman of the City of London.

Diane Lees was awarded a CBE in the Queen's New Year's Honours list in January 2015 and a DBE in the Queen's New Year's Honours list in January 2022 for services to museums. She was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Letters degree by the University of Reading in July 2015 and an Honorary Doctor of Arts degree by Nottingham Trent University in June 2017.

IWM

www.iwm.org.uk

IWM (Imperial War Museums) **tells the story of people who have lived, fought and died in conflicts involving Britain and the Commonwealth since the First World War.**

Our unique collections, made up of the everyday and the exceptional, reveal stories of people, places, ideas and events. Using these, we tell vivid personal stories and create powerful physical experiences across our five museums that reflect the realities of war as both a destructive and creative force. We challenge people to look at conflict from different perspectives, enriching their understanding of the causes, course and consequences of war and its impact on people's lives.

IWM's five branches which attract over 2.5 million visitors each year are **IWM London**, IWM's flagship branch that has recently transformed with new, permanent and free Second World War and The Holocaust Galleries; **IWM North**, housed in an iconic award-winning building designed by Daniel Libeskind; **IWM Duxford**, a world renowned aviation museum and Britain's best preserved wartime airfield; **Churchill War Rooms**, housed in Churchill's secret headquarters below Whitehall; and the Second World War cruiser **HMS Belfast**.