

Minutes of The National Archives' Board		THE
		NATIONAL
Held on 19 January 2021 at 10:00 via Video Conference (VC)		ARCHIVES

Present:

Lesley Cowley (LC - Chair) Chair of The National Archives' Board
Sonia Cargan (SC) Non-executive Board Member
Claire Feehily (CF) Non-executive Board Member
Mark Richards (MR) Non-executive Board Member
Ros Scott (RS) Non-executive Board Member
Neil Curtis (NC) Finance and Commercial Director
Paul Davies (PD) Operations Director
Lucy Fletcher (LF) Director for Government and Information Rights
Jeff James (JJ) Chief Executive and Keeper
Valerie Johnson (VJ) Director of Research and Collections
Caroline Ottaway-Searle (COS) Director of Public Engagement
John Sheridan (JS) Digital Director

Also present:

Asha Bagayat (AB) Head of Governance (Minutes)
Jane Craigie-Payne (JCP) Head of HR & Organisational Development (Item 6)
Catherine Elliott (CE) Head of Digital Services (Item 8)
Tom Gregan (TG) Head of Document Services (Item 9)
Mike Kostyn (MK) Interim Head of Finance (Item 7)
Head of Financial Management (Item 5)
Senior Governance Co-ordinator (Item 8 and 9)
Corporate Information Analyst (Item 9)
Sam Whaley (SW) Head of Strategy and CEO's Office

1.0	<u>Welcome / Introductions / Apologies / Declarations of Interest</u>
1.1	LC welcomed SC to her first meeting as a Non-executive Board Member. Introductions were made.
1.2	There were no apologies for absence.
1.3	There were no declarations of interest.
2.0	<u>Minutes / Matters Arising / Action Log</u>
2.1	Subject to minor amendments, the minutes of the meeting held on 9 December 2020 were approved as a correct record.
2.2	There were no matters arising.

2.3	The Board reviewed and noted the actions log.
3.0	<p><u>Executive Team Update</u></p> <p>3.1 The Board received an update on Executive Team activities.</p> <p>3.2 VJ provided a verbal update on the COVID-19 Archives Fund which closed on 15 January. The Fund had received c85 eligible applications from a wide range of archives, covering all four nations. The Panel was meeting on 27 January and was on track to distribute the money by 31 March. In terms of the approach to the oversubscription of the Fund, the Board was reassured that the archives most at risk would be prioritised and that the Panel was composed of individuals with a breadth of expertise and experience to ensure broad representation. VJ thanked CF for her input on the arrangements.</p> <p>3.3 In respect of the MoD Service Personnel records project, LF was pleased to report that a pilot transfer of 18 linear meters would take place on 9 February, which will enable The National Archives (TNA) to learn more about the informational rights issues, preservation risks and commercial opportunities of the collection. She undertook to provide an update on the pilot at the next meeting.</p> <p>3.4 The Board discussed the UAE project and agreed to ensure any financial uncertainty was mapped out in the forecasts.</p> <p>3.5 The Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Welcomed and noted the update; (ii) Welcomed an update on the pilot transfer of MoD Service Personnel Records at the next meeting; and (iii) Agreed to include uncertainty around the UAE project income in the financial forecasts. <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Action by: AB/LF/NC</i></p>
4.0	<p><u>Non-Executive Board Members' Updates</u></p> <p>4.1 Non-executive Board Members (NEBMs) each provided a verbal update on their recent activity.</p> <p>4.2 LC noted her upcoming call with Alex Howell, Deputy Director, Public Bodies, Appointments, Honours and Awards, DCMS.</p> <p>4.3 The recruitment of a new Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) was being run by Inclusive Boards and the advert would be going live shortly.</p> <p>4.4 MR reported on his involvement in the recruitment of the new Director of People, Inclusion and Change and Director of Public Engagement posts.</p> <p>4.5 The Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Noted the verbal updates; and

	<p>(ii) Requested that the advert for the Chair of the ARC be shared with Board members for onwards circulation.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Action by: AB</i></p>
5.0	<p><u>Production of the Annual Report and Accounts 2020-21</u></p>
5.1	<p>The Board reviewed the production timetable for the 2020-21 Annual Report and Accounts.</p>
5.2	<p>The Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Noted the production timetable; (ii) Received assurances around resourcing to deliver the annual accounts; (iii) Noted the key risks to the timetable were outside our control; and (iv) Looked forward to receiving a further update on the timetable at its March meeting. <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Action by: NC/AB</i></p>
6.0	<p><u>Corporate Wellbeing Support Framework</u></p>
6.1	<p>The Board received an assurance report on the corporate wellbeing support framework available to staff at The National Archives, to ensure management were doing all they can to discharge their corporate responsibility to its workforce and duty of care to wider stakeholders during the pandemic.</p>
6.2	<p>PD introduced the report and said The National Archives was running various initiatives which provided a high level of assurance around staff wellbeing. The organisation has had over 60 new starters since the beginning of lockdown and feedback from them on induction, support and wellbeing has been positive.</p>
6.3	<p>JCP provided a verbal summary on the annual usage report of the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) and highlighted that although take up was slightly lower than the previous year, anxiety has been cited as the highest reason for calls. A higher percentage of women were using the EAP, which was typical of usage of mental health resources, but all the same of some concern. Initiatives were being looked at to encourage men to come forward and discuss mental health.</p>
6.4	<p>The Board was provided with assurance that steps were also being taken to promote the physical, as well as mental wellbeing of staff, including looking at ‘get moving’ initiatives and subscriptions to exercise apps.</p>
6.5	<p>CF welcomed the report and praised the summary of the activities taking place to promote staff wellbeing, however she queried the outputs of the initiatives and how we might measure the successes of the interventions.</p>
6.6	<p>CF also queried the pressures on middle managers and equipping them to have delicate conversations around wellbeing and managing performance against a backdrop of homeworking, which has shifted normal supervisory boundaries. In response, JCP said that a range of initiatives have been developed to support managers on this, such as mental health</p>

<p>6.7</p> <p>6.8</p>	<p>workshops for managers, conversations at Senior Leadership Team meetings and the procurement of a new leadership development provider to include middle managers.</p> <p>PD pointed out that the Executive Team were aware of the significant burden on Heads of Departments and that conversations were taking place around setting expectations and being kinder to oneself, as it was acknowledged that people were not at their best and the impact of the ongoing pandemic was affecting both performance and concentration. He also spoke about revisiting the conversations that took place last August on the recovery model, as staff may have changed their views (following the third national lockdown) on how they want to work in a post-pandemic world. Conversations were also taking place on the end of year performance reviews and management’s response to the Staff Survey results.</p> <p>The Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Noted the sources of intervention and assurances on staff engagement and wellbeing; (ii) Welcomed and were assured that management were looking at both physical and mental wellbeing; (iii) Suggested finding ways to measure the outcomes and successes of the interventions; (iv) Noted the experiences, expertise and insights of NEBMs from other organisations; (v) Agreed The National Archives’ response to COVID-19 was something to be proud off and suggested that a version of the Corporate Wellbeing Framework be published on the website to tell that part of the story; (vi) Welcomed a future strategic discussion on the revised offer to staff, linked to the estate and cultural and digital transformation projects; and (vii) Welcomed a discussion on management’s response to the Staff Survey results at its March meeting along with a further update on wellbeing. <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Action by: PD/JCP</i></p>
<p>7.0</p> <p>7.1</p> <p>7.2</p> <p>7.3</p>	<p><u>Corporate Reports</u></p> <p><u>Financial Report for November</u></p> <p>The Board welcomed MK, The National Archives’ new Interim Head of Finance, who presented the November financial report, which forecasted an increased level of financial certainty.</p> <p>There was a verbal update on the December financial accounts which predicted no material movement on the projected underspend. The 9+3 forecast would be discussed by the Executive Team in February and presented to Board at its next meeting.</p> <p><u>Quarter 3 Strategic Intents and Business Priorities</u></p> <p>The Board received the Strategic Intents and Business Priorities Quarter 3 report and noted that the Executive Team had approved the metrics in time for the Internal Audit business review.</p>

7.4	<p>There was a discussion on the impact of the free digital download service, introduced during the pandemic, on the business model and the need for a strategic discussion on demand, price sensitivities and commercial opportunities.</p>
7.5	<p>In response to a question on our scope to shape and influence the return of staff to Kew in respect of the business priorities, PD confirmed that the return and long term offer to employees will be based on business needs, as well as Civil Service policy. COS added that getting staff back into Kew to deliver services, such as record copying and document ordering, will enable us to move forward on the delivery of site-based business priorities.</p>
7.6	<p>The Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Received and noted the November financials and verbal update on the December position; (ii) Looked forward to receiving the 9+3 financial forecast report at its next meeting; (iii) Received and noted the Strategic Intents and Business Priorities Q3 update; (iv) Welcomed a strategic discussion on the business modelling of the digital download service; (v) Suggested undertaking scenario planning for the return of staff to Kew and its impact on business priorities; and (vi) Looked forward to receiving the Q4 Strategic Intents and Business Priorities report at its April meeting.
<i>Action by: NC/MK/PD</i>	
8.0	<p><u>New Website - Update on Progress to Develop the Beta</u></p>
8.1	<p>The Board received a report providing an update on work to create a new website for The National Archives, particularly the Private Beta phase of development, which would enable more people to encounter our collection online, better help them to understand it, and support their participation.</p>
8.2	<p>JS and CE jointly introduced the report and noted that working with external providers has been a helpful process.</p>
8.3	<p>The Board was keen to move the conversation away from the technical build aspect, which it was pleased to note was going well, and to progress to the strategic discussions on what the website was going to be for, the audience type it would be catering for, and the commercial opportunities offered by licensing and potential partnerships to create audience demand and growth. It was noted that the Executive Team would need to have the discussions first and present its direction to the Board.</p>
8.4	<p>The Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Reaffirmed its commitment to developing a new website, as a cornerstone of delivering the <i>Archives for Everyone</i> strategy and as a priority for 2021-22 and beyond;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (ii) Received and noted the evolving strategic thinking about The National Archives' web presence; (iii) Welcomed a further strategic conversation on audience demand and growth and the commercial opportunities of the website, following consideration by the Executive Team; (iv) Received and noted progress to date on delivering the Private Beta and next steps; and (v) Looked forward to receiving an update on the outcome of the Private Beta, along with next steps, at its July meeting. <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Action by: JS/CE</i></p>
9.0	<u>Storage Strategy</u>
9.1	The Board received a paper outlining the forecasted increase in accessions over the next six years and the risks and challenges which this increase presents to The National Archives' finite physical storage space. The paper also outlined the Executive Team's decisions to address the short-term needs over the next two years. Thereby allowing time to consider a full range of long-term solutions and their strategic implications, which will inform the development of a long term storage strategy.
9.2	LF noted she would be starting the review of the collection policy later this year, which may have an impact The National Archives' accessions and therefore storage.
9.3	MR welcomed the paper and suggested this might be an opportunity to think bigger, beyond storage and linking with the Government's 'levelling up' agenda, making the collection accessible to new audiences through partnerships and exhibitions. JJ added that The National Archives Trust's national programme of engagement could also offer such opportunities.
9.4	<p>The Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Welcomed the paper; (ii) Endorsed the direction taken by the Executive Team to a) address short-term storage needs over the next two years and b) its considerations for a long-term storage strategy; (iii) Suggested exploring the feasibility of partnerships and developing fully-costed and risk-assessed proposals; and (iv) Noted that the Executive Team will form a direction on the long term storage strategy and welcomed a discussion on this at its September Strategy Day. <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Action by: COS/TG/NC</i></p>
10.0	<u>Any Other Business</u>
	<u>Forward Work Programme</u>
10.1	The Board reviewed the Forward Work Programme for Board meetings.
	<u>COVID-19 Response</u>

10.2	PD reported that The National Archives have registered an interest for the Civil Service asymmetric COVID-19 testing programme for its Essential Services Team that continue to maintain the Kew building during the lockdown.
10.3	The Board noted that the COVID-19 Response Team will have a conversation around the vaccine and policy around the return of staff and visitors to the building.
	<u>Realising the Inclusive Archives Strategy</u>
10.4	The Board noted that the Strategy will be circulated out-of-committee before the end of the month. POST MEETING NOTE: The Strategy was uploaded to Convene on 26 January for Board's endorsement. No comments were received and the Strategy was launched on 29 January.
There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 13.48	