

Public Minutes of The National Archives' Board		THE
		NATIONAL
Held on 23 February 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)
Mike Kostyn (MK) Interim Head of Finance (Item 7)
Gemma Maclagan Ram, Head of Licensing, Publishing and Digitisation (Item 3)
Head of Private Office (Item 10)
Government Relations Manager (Item 10)
Sam Whaley (SW) Head of Strategy and CEO's Office

1.0	<u>Welcome / Introductions / Apologies / Declarations of Interest</u>
1.1	There were no apologies for absence.
1.2	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 19 January 2021 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	<u>Executive Team Update</u>

3.1	The Board received an update on Executive Team activities.
3.2	Following the Prime Minister’s announcement on 22 February of the country’s road map out of lockdown, PD reported that we were awaiting further information from DCMS, including confirmation as to whether The National Archives (and archives more generally) were included with libraries (step two of the roadmap) or with museums (step three) and what this would mean for us as a workplace, including The Swedish School. The reading room booking system will be ready around the middle of April.
3.3	RS suggested looking at planning ahead to when there were fewer restrictions but COVID-19 remained a public health risk and how this might impact the reading room and staff onsite. In response, PD confirmed that the COVID Response Team would be looking at this.
3.4	NC provided a verbal update on JJ and his call with senior officials at the UAE.
3.5	JJ provided an update on the October 2021 International Council on Archives (ICA) Congress in collaboration with the UAE.
3.6	<p>The Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Received and noted the report; (ii) Was pleased to receive the data relating to the what’s online programme and welcomed a discussion on options relating to charging and other commercial opportunities at a future meeting; (iii) Noted that the COVID Response Team will be looking at the management of staff and public at Kew once there were fewer restrictions in place; and (iv) Would be kept updated on developments with the October ICA Congress. <p><u>1921 Census programme update</u></p>
3.7	The Board received a late report providing a progress update on the 1921 online Census programme.
3.8	GMR introduced the report and highlighted the project was moving quickly and therefore the report would become the first of regular updates to the Board for their major project oversight and assurance.
3.9	Discussions centred on managing public expectation relating to the potential risk of slippage in the delivery timetable as a result of the ongoing pandemic. The Board was assured that the Frequently Asked Questions section on the website had been updated and that communication lines were being prepared in partnership with the Office for National Statistics (ONS).
3.10	MR suggested making a call out for conservators from the wider archives sector to support the delivery of the work.
3.11	<p>The Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Welcomed the update;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (ii) Discussed the RAG ratings, progress and the risks to the programme; (iii) Received and noted the latest Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) report on the project; and (iv) Noted that significant progress, during a most difficult time, has been made; (v) Agreed the importance of stakeholder communication; (vi) Agreed that as it meets more frequently, the governance around project oversight should be handed to it, from the ARC, particularly because of the strategic, reputation and relationship angles of the programme; and (vii) Welcomed and agreed the format of the report and the level of detail it contained. <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Action by: NC/GMR</i></p>
<p>4.0</p> <p>4.1</p> <p>4.2</p> <p>4.3</p> <p>4.4</p> <p>4.5</p> <p>4.6</p>	<p><u>Non-Executive Board Members' Updates</u></p> <p>Non-executive Board Members (NEBMs) each provided a verbal update on their recent activity.</p> <p>LC reported on the recent special meeting of the Nominations and Governance Committee, which had looked at the new organisational structure.</p> <p>LC also provided an update on her call with Alex Howell, Deputy Director, Public Bodies, Appointments, Honours and Awards at DCMS. The discussions were centred on the introduction of new framework documents, board diversity, and board effectiveness, including chair appraisals.</p> <p>There was a discussion on contested heritage. MR suggested the new Director of Public Engagement thinks about lessons learned from wider organisations with regards to community engagement in this area. JJ added that DCMS was holding a roundtable meeting on contested heritage that he would be attending.</p> <p>CF reported that other organisations she was involved with were continuing to look at staff wellbeing, mental health endurance and also following the announcement of the roadmap out of lockdown, how they might support the workforce, which was later in the vaccination programme, particularly those from BAME groups.</p> <p>The Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Noted the verbal updates from NEBMs; (ii) Noted that the COVID-19 Response Team will be looking at options for supporting staff whom are later in the vaccine programme, and will be communicating this once we have received further guidance from DCMS; and (iii) Noted that the Civil Service were offering another Pulse Survey on inclusion, which subject to Executive Team agreement, it endorsed participating in. <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Action by: PD</i></p>
<p>5.0</p>	<p><u>Audit and Risk Committee Chair's Verbal Update</u></p>

<p>5.1</p>	<p>CF provided a verbal update on the 4 February Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) meeting. The following main points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Committee had met with the Auditors and received positive feedback; • The 2020/21 Audit Plan was progressing according to schedule; • Our preparedness for the 2021/22 Audit Plan has been noted as positive; • There was good assurance around the Corporate Risk Register, including the level of detail it contains; • Flags for the year end accounts were to be brought to the attention of NAO; • Pressures on NAO for the auditing of the final accounts was noted; and • Resource levels within the Finance Team were noted.
<p>5.2</p>	<p>In response to a question by RS on the volume of reports and work undertaken by the ARC, CF noted that the February meeting was always busy and that the Committee normally receives short and concise reports pitched at the right level to get through the business. There was a point about getting the risk position on major projects right, and pushing oversight back to the Board where necessary, to prevent the Committee falling into the trap of becoming a project management group. PD added his praise for CF's chairing skills.</p>
<p>5.3</p>	<p>The Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Received and noted the verbal update; (ii) Received and noted the draft minutes of the 4 February meeting; and (iii) Thanked CF for her excellent preparation and chairing of meetings.
<p>6.0</p>	<p><u>Corporate Reports</u></p>
<p></p>	<p><u>Financial Report for December</u></p>
<p>6.1</p>	<p>The Board received the December financial report.</p>
<p></p>	<p><u>9+3 Financial Forecast</u></p>
<p>6.2</p>	<p>The Board received the 9+3 report, which forecasted an increased level of financial certainty and movement back towards a smaller underspend.</p>
<p>6.3</p>	<p>In response to a question on the movement of our principal assumptions on capital and revenue, NC said that we have been responsive and agile in a volatile and uncertain environment and demonstrated effective capital management.</p>
<p>6.4</p>	<p>The Board:</p>
<p></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Received and noted the December financial position;
<p></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (ii) Looked forward to receiving the January financials at its next meeting;
<p></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (iii) Received and noted the 9+3 financial forecast report; and
<p></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (iv) Acknowledged that the impact of the pandemic on capital projects has made it trickier to land on budget and that HM Treasury would receive unallocated funding.

7.0	<p><u>Board Effectiveness Survey Results 2020</u></p>
7.1	<p>The Board was presented with the results of the 2020/21 completed survey and invited to note those questions where there has been significant change from the 2019/20 results and where there were areas of difference between the Executive Team and Non-executive Board Members. Board members were also invited to discuss the pre-submitted collated suggestions for potential inclusion in an action plan for 2021.</p>
7.2	<p>Overall, there was praise for the functioning of the Board, during what has been a highly uncertain year. The results were commended and considered a good place to be as the composition of the Board changes over the coming 12 months. The remarkable chairing skills of LC were particularly noted.</p>
7.3	<p>There was a detailed discussion on suggested themes and items for the 2021 Board Effectiveness Action Plan, which included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion and diversity; • Review of the split of items going to the Board/Audit and Risk Committee; • Increasing the visibility of NEBMs amongst the Senior Leadership Team and wider organisation; • Calling upon the expertise and knowledge of NEBMs in-between meetings and involving them appropriately on projects and schemes; • Strategic discussions, particularly around our sector leadership role and reflections of organisational direction and velocity – including the plan for how Board should hold strategic discussions; and • Governance changes, i.e. involvement of NEBMs in building development plans and demonstrating how projects link with the strategy.
7.4	<p>The Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Received and noted the survey results; (ii) Felt they were largely positive and reflected evidence of a good performing board, which should not be lost sight off; (iii) Found it useful to see the areas of difference between the Executive Team and Non-executive Board Members; (iv) Received and reviewed the 2020 Board Effectiveness Action Plan for items to carry forward into the 2021 Board Effectiveness Action Plan; (v) Discussed the collated pre-submitted ideas for potential inclusion in the 2021 Board Effectiveness action plan; and (i) Agreed the Head of Governance and the Chair will work on a draft action plan based on the comments made at the meeting and bring it to a future meeting for discussion and agreement. <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Action by: LC/AB</i></p>
8.0	<p><u>Terms of Reference of The National Archives' Board and its Associated Sub-Committees</u></p>

<p>8.1</p> <p>8.2</p>	<p>The Board was invited to review its terms of reference and the terms of references of its two Sub-committees, the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) and the Nominations and Governance Committee (N&G).</p> <p>The Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Reviewed its terms of reference and the terms of references of its two Sub-committees; (ii) Agreed that governance around whistleblowing and safeguarding should be included in the ARC’s terms of reference; (iii) Agreed that subject to (ii) above, the revised draft should be circulated to the ARC members out-of-committee for write-around approval and then come back to the Board for its final approval along with the complete suite of final documents; (iv) Agreed to the publication of the terms of reference of the Board and its two Sub-committees on The National Archives’ website; (v) Agreed to delegate authority to the Head of Governance, to make editorial changes to the membership of the Audit and Risk Committee and Nominations and Governance Committee’s terms of reference, once the Executive Team restructure has been implemented. The Board will be notified out-of-committee once this has been completed; and (vi) Noted that the Board may be required to review the terms of reference for the Board and its sub-committees in light of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport’s (DCMS) Partnership Project. <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Action by: AB/IG</i></p>
<p>9.0</p> <p>9.1</p> <p>9.2</p> <p>9.3</p> <p>9.4</p>	<p><u>Organisational Restructuring</u></p> <p>The Board received a report providing an update on the group conversations the independent consultant has been having with Directors and members of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) about the proposals in the ‘Delivering <i>Archives for Everyone</i>’ project, which supports the development of a refreshed corporate structure and delivery of The National Archives’ vision.</p> <p>JJ provided a verbal update on the contract and outstanding and further work the consultant will be involved with.</p> <p>In response to a question on the cultural and behavioural issues identified in the report, JJ said that this will be addressed through the new People Strategy and changing the way we work programme once the new Director of People, Inclusion and Change is in post and will be shared with the Board in due course.</p> <p>There was a discussion on how the proposals have been received by the organisation. It was noted that the broad thrust has not been objected to but that some areas have needed to be explained further, with managers stepping up and driving through the messaging. Talent development and succession planning was part of the offer, including hand over plans and doubling up on projects to preserve and distil corporate memory and business continuity planning. With PD and COS’s upcoming retirements, discussions were also taking place about</p>

9.5	<p>Executive Team sponsors of the COVID Response Team.</p> <p>The Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Welcomed and thanked the authors for the update; and (ii) Received assurances around business continuity planning in relation to upcoming senior management changes.
10.0	<p><u>Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport's Partnership Project and the relationship with The National Archives</u></p> <p>10.1 The Board received a briefing paper on the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport's (DCMS) Partnership Project for its Public Bodies, which intends to strengthen relationships and to build a stronger accountability framework. The paper provided an overview of the Partnership Project, including an update on the annual framework document, as well as provided a broad overview of The National Archives' wider relations with DCMS.</p> <p>10.2 The Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Welcomed the briefing; (ii) Noted the DCMS' Partnership Project, including the tight timeframe to agree the 2021-2022 framework document; (iii) Suggested future proofing the framework document and discussing with DCMS any mismatches with primary legislation and/or JJ's Principal Accounting Officer responsibilities; (iv) Endorsed linking up with senior officials at the Charity Commission to share thoughts and issues with the template; (v) Agreed to set up a Board sub-committee made up of JS, RS, MR and LC to review the framework document; and (vi) Received and noted the general overview of The National Archives' relationship with DCMS. <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Action by: SW/LH</i></p>
11.0	<p><u>Any Other Business</u></p> <p><u>Forward Work Programme</u></p> <p>11.1 The Board reviewed and agreed the Forward Work Programme for Board meetings.</p> <p><u>COVID-19 Response</u></p> <p>11.2 The Board was pleased to note that several staff members have been involved in the NHS plasma donation scheme.</p>

11.3	<p>The Civil Service has introduced site based COVID-19 non-symptom testing (lateral flow test) for staff and service partners who are coming to the workplace. Our staff will be able to go to the Richmond Centre to be tested.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 13.45</p>
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