

Minutes of The National Archives' Board		THE
		NATIONAL
Held on 23 March 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
Emmajane Avery (EJA) Director of Public Engagement (Incoming)
Neil Curtis (NC) Chief Operating Officer
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 (Outgoing)
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)
Tom Gregan, Head of Document Services (Item 9)
Mike Kostyn (MK) Interim Head of Finance (Item 5)
Gemma Maclagan Ram, Head of Licensing, Publishing and Digitisation (Item 3)
Emma Markiewicz, Head of Archive Sector Development (Item 10)
Sam Whaley (SW) Head of Strategy and CEO's Office
Head of Strategic Insight (Item 10)
HR Manager - Organisational Development (Item 6)

1.0	<u>Welcome / Introductions / Apologies / Declarations of Interest</u>
1.1	LC welcomed EJA to her first Board meeting.
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 23 February 2021 were approved as a correct record.
2.2	The Board noted the following matters arising:

2.3	<p>(i) Item 9, Organisational Restructuring - LF and EJA have now joined The National Archives' COVID Response team; and</p> <p>(ii) Item 11, COVID-19 Response – Defra have confirmed they will be setting up a rapid COVID testing facility at Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, which our staff could access. We have received 280 home self-testing kits, which will be made available to staff. Our partners have received their own home self-testing kits.</p> <p>The Board reviewed and noted the actions log.</p>
3.0	<p><u>Executive Team Update</u></p> <p>3.1 The Board received an update on Executive Team activities.</p> <p><u>Executive Team Update Report</u></p> <p>3.2 Regarding our reopening plans, COS noted we were still awaiting legal advice on whether we were in Step 2 or Step 3 of the Roadmap out of lockdown and would begin communicating to the public as soon as we received confirmation from DCMS. From 29 March, additional staff will be able to return to work onsite. Specialist external technical contractors had been brought in to support the upgrading of the reading room booking system. All preparations were underway for the building to be ready to welcome the public on 27 April.</p> <p>3.3 LC, reflecting on the experiences at other organisations, sought assurance around the support being provided to staff feeling anxious about returning to Kew, particularly those who were later in the vaccination programme. In response, PD said managers were being asked to carry out surveys on staff preparedness to return to work and that two members of the Human Resources team will be onsite each day to offer support. The main concern was around staff journeys into work, which have been stressful for some, and require visible management and time for support once they arrive in the building.</p> <p>3.4 SC queried management's response around staff absolutely not wanting to return to the building. PD highlighted hybrid working within the 'Change the way we work' programme, which will be discussed with Trade Union-Side. On an individual level, he cited engagement with the Employee Assistance Programme and Occupational Health for support.</p> <p>3.5 VJ provided a verbal update on the COVID 'Archives at Risk Fund' and provided assurances that grant agreements had been signed and monies had been transferred for all but one of the applicants. Queries related to lessons learnt and, in response to the fund being oversubscribed, exploring opportunities for repeating the grant.</p> <p>3.6 JJ provided an update on the International Council on Archives (ICA) Congress and agreed to update the Board at its next meeting.</p> <p>3.7 JJ also thanked the Board's working group members for commenting on the draft Framework Document and noted his office were trying to negotiate an extension with DCMS.</p> <p>3.8 The Board noted an update on an ongoing partnership opportunity and that the Head of</p>

	Procurement was working on the scope and service provision. DCMS legal team were involved and an engagement plan was being prepared to inform stakeholders.
3.9	PD provided a verbal update on a Business Continuity exercise.
3.10	PD was also pleased to report The National Archives has been reaccredited for cyber security credentials.
3.11	<p>The Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Welcomed and noted the update; (ii) Commended the quality of staff communications; (iii) Received assurance on the steps management were taking to support staff returning to the building; (iv) In respect of the COVID 'Archives at Risk Fund': <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Received assurances that all payments will be made before the end of the financial year; b. Endorsed the internal audit of the governance and accountability of the COVID 'Archives at Risk Fund'; and c. Noted the report will be presented to the Audit and Risk Committee and will support any future business case put to HM Treasury. (v) Looked forward for an update on the International Council on Archives (ICA) Congress at its next meeting. <p><u>Partnership Project with the Ministry of Justice</u></p>
3.12	The Board was invited to note the decision by the government (the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice) to engage with The National Archives in a partnership project.
3.13	<p>The Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Welcomed and noted the update; (ii) Endorsed the approach set out in the report; (iii) Requested to be kept informed of the risks and uncertainties around the project; (iv) Looked forward to receiving details of the plans and progress on discussions; and (v) Agreed to be kept informed through the Executive Team update report. <p><u>1921 Online Census – RAG Update</u></p>
3.14	The Board was invited to note the update on the 1921 Census programme and discuss RAG ratings, progress and risks identified.
3.15	There was a detailed discussion around cleaning historic surface mould on the collection and how this was being managed.

<p>3.16</p> <p>3.17</p>	<p>JJ reported on his meeting with his counterpart at the National Records of Scotland and their thinking and planning around their historical census next year, which provided a useful context.</p> <p>The Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Welcomed and noted the update and the Amber RAG rating position; and (ii) Suggested contacting mould expert, Dr Jane Nicklin, Birkbeck, University of London for specialist advice, if appropriate.
<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><u>Non-Executive Board Members' Updates</u></p> <p>Non-executive Board Members (NEBMs) each provided a verbal update on their recent activity, including insights from other organisations, which included ensuring good relationships with trade unions, return to work planning and staff responses and introducing keeping in touch initiatives for Board members.</p> <p>LC was pleased to report on the successful outcome of the recent Audit and Risk Committee Chair interviews. CF was keen to meet her successor and commence the handover process.</p> <p>The Nominations and Governance Committee had met on 16 March 2021 to discuss the new Chief Operating Officer portfolio, end of year reviews and also agreed to go out to advert again for the Director of People, Inclusion and Change post via an agency to attract a wider pool of candidates.</p> <p>RS reported on meetings of the All Parliamentary Group and that she had put the Heritage Rail Group in touch with Archives Sector Development.</p> <p>The Board noted the verbal updates.</p>
<p>5.0</p> <p>5.1</p> <p>5.2</p> <p>5.3</p> <p>5.4</p>	<p><u>Corporate Reports</u></p> <p><u>Financial Report for January and February</u></p> <p>The Board was invited to review and endorse the January and February 2021 Management Accounts and noted cash was being carefully monitored as year-end neared.</p> <p><u>Budget 2021-22</u></p> <p>The Board was invited to review and endorse the Budget for 2021-22.</p> <p>NC provided a verbal update on his discussions with HM Treasury relating to our business case for financial freedoms.</p> <p><u>Business Plan 2021-22</u></p> <p>The Board was invited to review and endorse Year 2 of the Strategic Intent Business Plan.</p>

<p>5.5</p> <p>5.6</p>	<p><u>Corporate Risk Register</u></p> <p>The Board was invited to review the Corporate Risk Register, with a particular focus on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, mitigations, residual risk scores and potential new or escalated risks.</p> <p>The Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Received and endorsed the January and February financials; (ii) Congratulated MK and the finance team for their resilience in managing remotely and getting to the accounting position as presented; (iii) Received assurance that the organisation was reasonably set for the year-end accounting process; (iv) Received and endorsed the Budget 2021-22; (v) Noted the verbal update relating to seeking financial freedoms from HM Treasury; (vi) Subject to revisiting the wording in Strategic Intent 5 (ii), agreed the 2021-22 Business Plan; (vii) Reviewed and noted the Corporate Risk Register; and (viii) Felt confident that it was alert to and discussing new and escalated risks at meetings. <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Action by: NC/MK/PD</i></p>
<p>6.0</p> <p>6.1</p> <p>6.2</p> <p>6.3</p> <p>6.4</p>	<p><u>Staff Survey Results and Update on Wellbeing Framework</u></p> <p>The Board was invited to review and discuss the results of the 2020 Civil Service People Survey, which provided a measure of the experience of staff at The National Archives, in particular through the first 8-months of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions, and to comment on the corporate response to the feedback provided. Following discussion at the 19 January meeting, the Board also received an update on The National Archives' wellbeing initiatives and was invited to suggest further initiatives.</p> <p>DC introduced the report and outlined the key findings of the survey. She highlighted that management had been careful to draw comparisons to previous years, as it was an unprecedented period, and have agreed, this was not the year to implement a detailed action plan, which would require capacity. Instead, the Executive Team have asked the Senior Leadership Team to focus on one or two areas, which can make a difference to their staff.</p> <p>JCP provided an update on recent wellbeing initiatives and steps that have been taken to increase engagement. She highlighted that self-care sessions have had the most attendance, and although female staff take up was still higher, this was beginning to balance. She noted the wellbeing programme will continue to try new things and actively respond to feedback.</p> <p>In response to LC's query around learning and development, which has featured as an area of concern in previous surveys, particularly relating to a lack of career progression opportunities at The National Archives, DC provided a detailed overview of the programme, including supporting staff to look for opportunities outside of the organisation and the wider Civil Service.</p>

6.5	In response to MR's query, PD provided a detailed verbal update on how The National Archives was managing work-related stress cases.
6.6	SC queried how management were treating neutral responses to the survey questions and noted it was challenging to determine what neutral responses mean in the absence of a 'not applicable' option.
6.7	<p>The Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Welcomed the update and thought it was a good set of results for the year we have had, with an encouraging and positive message for the organisation; and (ii) Was pleased to receive assurances around the ongoing wellbeing programme.
7.0	At 12 noon the Board paused for one minute silence to mark the anniversary of the UK's first National lockdown, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
8.0	<p><u>Vote of Thanks for COS</u></p> <p>8.1 As this was COS' last Board meeting, before her impending retirement on 31 March, LC led the vote of thanks. She noted COS's tremendous service to The National Archives since joining us in 2008 and becoming the Director of Public Engagement in 2015. She expressed gratitude for her noteworthy work this last year in leading the organisation's COVID-19 Response. On Behalf of the Board, LC thanked COS and wished her well for her retirement. This was followed by a round of applause.</p> <p>8.2 COS responded with a few words reminiscing of her time at The National Archives and the positive direction the organisation was going in and thanked her colleagues for the warm words and presentation.</p>
9.0	<p><u>Short Term Storage Plans</u></p> <p>9.1 Following discussion at its 19 January 2021 meeting, the Board was invited to discuss the plans to date to maximise The National Archives' short-term storage capacity.</p> <p>9.2 In response to queries around flood mitigations at Kew, the Board noted that both buildings were designed with flood defence in mind and that the section of the Thames adjacent to The National Archives has a significant section of flood defence embankment.</p> <p>9.3 The Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Received and noted the report; (ii) Endorsed the short term plans to provide 21 linear km of storage space at Kew and offsite to meet the organisation's short term storage needs until 2021-24; and (iii) Received assurances around flood risk mitigations. <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Action by: COS/EJA/TG</i></p>

10.0	<u>Archives Sector Leadership Model</u>
10.1	Following the September 2020 strategy day, where members expressed a desire to know more about ‘the state of the sector’ and The National Archives’ leadership offer, the Board received a paper and an accompanying presentation providing an overview of our current intelligence on the archives sector’s views of and responses to The National Archives’ activities as leader of the sector in England. The Board was invited to discuss the high-level questions posed in the paper, comment on the proposed scope of the review and agree the timings for further discussion in 2021.
10.2	VJ, in introducing the strategic discussion, thanked SB and SW for their contribution. She highlighted that this was an opportunity for The National Archives, particularly since the pandemic, to clearly define its leadership offer to the sector, with boundaries that are secure and sustainable for the future. Demands from the sector centred on funding, workforce development, digital capability and advocacy and our approach thus far has been <i>ad hoc</i> and responsive.
10.3	SB outlined the data evidence to frame the discussions.
10.4	Given our status, it was not appropriate for The National Archives to provide advocacy and leadership around certain issues, however, MR felt there could be a role for us to foster discussion and debate and facilitate connections with partners already operating in that area.
10.5	Board members broadly welcomed the paper and thought it was a timely piece of work and urged Archives Sector Development to hold high quality discussions with the sector on what they need from The National Archives in its leadership role to inform the review.
10.6	JS highlighted the Public Sector Funding Agreement and what it could and could not do. He also cautioned that the needs of archivists and the needs of archive users may not be the same, and will require different lenses whilst undertaking the review.
10.7	<p>The Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Welcomed the paper and presentation; (ii) Endorsed undertaking a review to inform a clear focused leadership offer to the sector; (iii) Agreed the review should start with discussions with the sector on what it needs, without overpromising, to inform a co-produced offer; (iv) Endorsed the timeline, which was ambitious but deliverable; and (v) Agreed that the scope of the review be presented to Board, either at a meeting or via write round to prevent delay. <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Action by: VJ/EM</i></p>
11.0	<p><u>Any Other Business</u></p> <p><u>Forward Work Programme</u></p>
11.1	The Board reviewed the Forward Work Programme for Board meetings.

New DCMS Guidance

11.2 It was noted that there will shortly be new guidance regarding the flying of the Union Flag on all Government buildings.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 14.00