

Public Minutes of The National Archives' Board		THE
		NATIONAL
Held on 20 April 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 (joined the meeting from Item 7 onwards)  
Mark Richards (MR) Non-executive Board Member  
Ros Scott (RS) Non-executive Board Member  
Emmajane Avery (EJA) Director of Public Engagement  
Neil Curtis (NC) Chief Operating Officer  
Paul Davies (PD) Operations Director  
Lucy Fletcher (LF) Director for Public Records Access and Government Services  
Jeff James (JJ) Chief Executive and Keeper  
Valerie Johnson (VJ) Director of Research and Collections  
John Sheridan (JS) Digital Director

**Also present:**

Asha Bagayat (AB) Head of Governance (Minutes)  
Beth Brunton (BB) Head of The National Archives Trust (Item 3)  
Gemma Maclagan Ram (GMR) Head of Licensing, Publishing and Digitisation (Item 4)  
Sir Anthony Seldon (SAS) Chair of The National Archives Trust (Item 3)  
Dr Tony Wakeford (TW) Chair of the Friends of The National Archives (Item 8)  
Pip Wilcox (PW) Head of Research (Item 10)  
Sam Whaley (SW) Head of Strategy and CEO's Office

1.0	<b><u>Welcome / Introductions / Apologies / Declarations of Interest</u></b>
1.1	Apologies for lateness were received from CF, owing to a diary clash.
1.2	There were no declarations of interest.
2.0	<b><u>Minutes / Matters Arising / Action Log</u></b>
2.1	Subject to minor amendments, the minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 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	<b><u>Update from The National Archives Trust</u></b>

3.1	The Board received a paper providing an overview of progress made since the launch of The National Archives Trust in February 2020 and the completion of its first financial year. The update included the Trust's fundraising priorities, progress towards a campaign for fundraising and the Clore Learning Centre.
3.2	LC welcomed SAS and BB to the meeting. Introductions were made.
3.3	In outlining the fundraising ambitions of The National Archives Trust, SAS spoke about the work of the highly experienced consultants that have been appointed to develop the Trust's fundraising strategy. As part of their work, the consultants were talking to key stakeholders and major funding bodies. Subject to the recommendation of the consultants, the Trust would be seeking to appoint a fund raising manager by September 2021, who will be responsible for delivering the strategy. It was noted that progress on work had been impacted by the pandemic.
3.4	MR suggested the fundraising strategy clarify the expectations of The National Archives in supporting its delivery. In response, SAS welcomed engagement and expertise from The National Archives, particularly in relation to telling the nation's stories, the government's levelling up agenda and core knowledge of the curriculum. He also welcomed stakeholder engagement between Board members and the consultants to inform the strategy, whilst maintaining the independence of the two organisations and the Trust's charitable status.
3.5	EJA spoke of her experience of engaging with the consultants and noted she felt confident in their skills and abilities and enjoyed working with them.
3.6	In relation to a discussion on how the Trust and The National Archives can work together to ensure successful delivery of the fundraising priorities, EJA said that this required clearly-defined co-working to develop a tight proposition, which can be put to potential funders. As such, the final strategy would need to be approved and supported by both The Trust and The National Archives' Board. LC noted the importance of good lines of communications between the Trust and Board, with clear governance structures to maintain the independent statuses of the two organisations.
3.7	In response to a question by VJ, BB noted that the Trust was keen to work with the archive sector and were linked up with The National Archives' Archive Sector Development team to support its programme of national engagement. They were particularly keen to work with and support archives bodies from across the country who do not currently have good provision in place.
3.8	<p>The Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Welcomed and noted the update;</li> <li>(ii) Praised SAS's highly informative recent talk on the history of British prime ministers;</li> <li>(iii) Agreed to keep in touch and hold regular meetings with the Trust;</li> <li>(iv) Noted LC would be invited to a future Trust meeting; and</li> <li>(v) LC thanked SAS and BB for attending the meeting.</li> </ul>

4.0 **Executive Team Update**

4.1 The Board received an update on Executive Team activities.

Executive Team Update Report

4.2 It was noted that a business case was being put together regarding a potential partnership, which will be presented to the Board.

4.3 JS provided an update on the latest developments with regards to the potential partnership project with the Ministry of Justice.

4.4 PD provided a verbal update on staff numbers returning to Kew. In response to a question by LC on the general feelings of staff coming back, PD noted that they were largely positive and pleased to be back in the building. Return to work interviews were now being carried out by managers for desk based staff, which was providing useful insights. He added that relationships with Trade Union-Side were good and they had recently completed a site visit and signed off on the risk assessment and equality impact assessment in relation to the return of staff to Kew. Discussions on hybrid working were also taking place.

4.5 JJ provided a verbal update on the recruitment of the Director of People, Inclusion and change.

4.6 The Board:

- (i) Noted the update; and
- (ii) Recognised the work and achievements of the Legislation team in relation to EU Exit and asked for its appreciation to be recorded in the minutes.

New reading room booking system

4.7 The Board noted that the new reading room booking system was launched on 19 April in preparation for the reopening on 27 April. EJA explained that the new service has been developed entirely around the visitor experience to make the process simpler for both visitors and staff and has been the result of months of development and testing. However, disappointingly for the development team and organisation, just before its launch, our website became unavailable owing to a conflict with the Content Management System. This drew some criticism on social media. The Board noted that statements were put on our social media channels apologising for the disruption. JJ added that once the issue had been resolved and visitors were able to access the service, the feedback has been positive with an improved visitor experience.

4.8 The Board:

- (i) Welcomed and noted the update;
- (ii) Received assurances that the project team were keeping an eye on the website issue and taking mitigating steps to minimise the risk of the website becoming unavailable

<p>4.9</p> <p>4.10</p>	<p>again;</p> <p>(iii) Noted the quick reactions of the project team and that communications had been good and asked that a positive message be conveyed back to them noting and praising their efforts; and</p> <p>(iv) Agreed that a lessons learned exercise should be undertaken.</p> <p><u>1921 Online Census – RAG Update</u></p> <p>The Board was invited to note the update on the 1921 Census programme and discuss RAG ratings, progress and risks identified.</p> <p>The Board:</p> <p>(i) Welcomed and noted the update and the RAG rating position; and</p> <p>(ii) Received assurances around the transcription service based in India, which was experiencing a significant second wave of the pandemic, and the contingency plans around this.</p>
<p>5.0</p> <p>5.1</p> <p>5.2</p> <p>5.3</p> <p>5.4</p>	<p><b><u>Non-Executive Board Members’ Updates</u></b></p> <p>Non-executive Board Members (NEBMs) each provided a verbal update on their recent activity, including insights from other organisations.</p> <p>LC noted her induction meeting with Rommel Pereira; that she had recently presented to the Association of Public Sector Chief Executives on leading organisations through uncertainty; and attended a Women on Board’s session on the theme of diversity. JJ and she have also started conversations on the recruitment of a new Chair, as her term comes to an end in December 2021.</p> <p>SC noted she would be joining the Diversity Forum in June and had also been interviewed for the April issue of the staff Talk Magazine.</p> <p>The Board noted the verbal updates.</p>
<p>6.0</p> <p>6.1</p> <p>6.2</p>	<p><b><u>Corporate Reports</u></b></p> <p><u>Quarter 4 Business Priorities</u></p> <p>The Board received an update on progress on the Q4 Strategic Intent business priorities and noted that all of the metrics were either ‘on track’ or ‘nearly on track’. Where items were ‘nearly on track’ the reasons have been explained in the narrative and largely relate to factors outside of our control.</p> <p>The Board:</p>

6.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Received assurance that the Finance team were working to finalise year-end accounts in advance of the annual audit;</li> <li>(ii) Agreed the structure of the Strategic Intent business priorities reporting;</li> <li>(iii) Suggested where items were 'nearly on track' a likely completion date be added to the narrative;</li> <li>(iv) Subject to (iii) above endorsed the Strategic Intent business priorities Q4 update;</li> <li>(v) Noted the new quarterly Strategic Intent dashboard will be presented to it at the end of Q1 2021-22.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Action by: NC/MK/PD</i></p> <p><b>POST MEETING NOTE:</b> The Board was emailed on 4 May 2021 and asked to agree via write round to change the status of 'Strategic Intent - Lead the archives sector to a secure and sustainable future' from 'nearly on track' to 'on track'. This was agreed by Board members and a copy of all the emails has been kept on file for the records.</p>
7.0	<p><b><u>First Draft of the Annual Report 2020-21</u></b></p> <p>7.1 CF joined the meeting partway through the item.</p> <p>7.2 The Board was invited to comment on the 'front end' of the draft Annual Report 2021-21 and noted that work on some sections of the 'back end' of the report had already started.</p> <p>7.3 The Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Received and reviewed the first draft of the annual report;</li> <li>(ii) Broadly endorsed the structure and felt it covered our COVID-19 story and brought out the breadth of the work the organisation undertakes;</li> <li>(iii) Noted the Project Team will incorporate its comments into the next iteration;</li> <li>(iv) Suggested having a conversation with The National Archives Trust on whether there was anything we needed to incorporate into our annual report which can support their fundraising programme/strategy;</li> <li>(v) Noted the production timetable was on track; and</li> <li>(vi) Congratulated and thanked the Project Team for their work thus far.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Action by: AB/NC</i></p>
8.0	<p><b><u>Annual Meeting with the Friends of The National Archives</u></b></p> <p>8.1 The Board received a report setting out the achievements and activities of the Friends of The National Archives, since its last updates (i) in person on 20 February 2020 and (ii) out-of-committee report in September 2020.</p> <p>8.2 LC welcomed TW to the meeting. Introductions were made.</p> <p>8.3 TW reported that the Friends have been moving at pace and the lockdown had allowed it to focus on the Charitable Incorporate Organisation (CIO) transition process, which was now</p>

<p>8.4</p> <p>8.5</p> <p>8.6</p>	<p>complete; allowing the outsourcing of administrative and governance functions to enable volunteers to focus on volunteering activities. The Friends have appointed two new Trustees and two outreach coordinators and also set up informal networks with other 'Friends' organisations.</p> <p>In response to questions, TW noted that the Friends were looking to develop their online offer to expand their audiences and membership. With new members joining, who have never been to Kew, there were opportunities to refresh the online events programme. They have recently recruited a social media coordinator to further support this work.</p> <p>TW outlined the thinking and approach to succession planning for a new chair and said that this was well advanced with the bringing together of people with charity and commercial experience to take the Friends forward. He hoped to have identified the next generation of trustees in the next six months.</p> <p>The Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Received and noted the update, including the concerns and aspirations of the Friends;</li> <li>(ii) Thanked the Friends and looked forward to working with them on further projects; and</li> <li>(iii) Wished TW well for the future and thanked him for attending the meeting.</li> </ul>
<p>9.0</p> <p>9.1</p> <p>9.2</p> <p>9.3</p> <p>9.4</p> <p>9.5</p>	<p><b><u>New Strategic Approach to Research</u></b></p> <p>The Board received a paper and presentation setting out a new strategic approach for research at The National Archives; one that purposefully and actively supports the delivery of its vision, <i>Archives for Everyone</i>, and achieves our strategic intent to realise the value of archives through research and innovation.</p> <p>VJ introduced the discussion and noted that the new approach was to have planned and agreed research projects for staff, which visibly deliver/contribute towards the delivery of our strategy. She outlined the benefits of this for both the organisation and the researchers.</p> <p>In response to a question by MR, VJ confirmed that going forwards the research programme will be aligned to the financial business planning process.</p> <p>The Board noted that the successful delivery of the programme will depend upon the behaviour and actions of staff and the development of a strengthened and supportive research culture. There was a detailed discussion on change management and the steps being taken to engage with staff to highlight the benefits of the model and incorporating their ideas into the research programme.</p> <p>The Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Welcomed and endorsed the new approach, particularly the coherent governance structure;</li> <li>(ii) Noted that the change will take time to embed and having projects linked to</li> </ul>

	<p>performance objectives will support the process; and</p> <p>(iii) Looked forward to receiving an update in a year's time.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Action by: VJ/PW</i></p>
10.0	<p><b><u>Any Other Business</u></b></p> <p><u>Forward Work Programme</u></p>
10.1	<p>The Board reviewed the Forward Work Programme for Board meetings.</p> <p><u>Death of HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh</u></p>
10.2	<p>The Board noted the sad news of the death of the Duke of Edinburgh. EJA provided a verbal update on the activities of The National Archives in response to operation Forth Bridge and provided assurance that all the right protocols had been followed in respect of our duties as a government body.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 14.16</b></p>