

Public Minutes of The National Archives' Board		THE
		NATIONAL
Held on 22 October 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  
Rommel Pereira (RP) 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  
Neil Curtis (NC) Chief Operating Officer  
Lucy Fletcher (LF) Director for Public Records Access and Government Services  
Jeff James (JJ) Chief Executive and Keeper (joined the meeting from item 5 onwards)  
Valerie Johnson (VJ) Director of Research and Collections  
Gemma Maclagan Ram (GMR) Commercial Director  
John Sheridan (JS) Digital Director

**Also present:**

Head of International and External Affairs (Item 10)  
Asha Bagayat (AB) Head of Governance (Minutes)  
Beth Brunton (BB) Head of The National Archives Trust (Item 7)  
Alex Forbes (AF) Head of Government Services (Item 9)  
Mike Kostyn (MK) Interim Head of Finance (Item 6)  
Malcolm Todd (MT) Head of Policy (Item 3)  
Sam Whaley (SW) Head of Strategy and CEO's Office

**1.0 Apologies and Declarations of Interest**

- 1.1 There were no apologies for absence.
- 1.2 LC declared an interest in item 6 as a potential tenderer for the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) project was also a supplier at another organisation she was on the board of. There were no further declarations of interest.

**2.0 Minutes, Matters Arising and Action Log**

- 2.1 Subject to minor amendments, the minutes of the meeting held on 27 July 2021 were approved as a correct record.
- 2.2 The Board reviewed and agreed the record of its out-of-committee business and activities.
- 2.3 There were no matters arising.
- 2.4 The Board reviewed and noted the actions log.

### **3.0 Executive Team Update**

3.1 The Board received an update on Executive Team activities.

#### Executive Team Update Report

3.2 The Board congratulated the team for putting the Comprehensive Spending Review submission together and was pleased to note the successful outcome, which would be formally announced on 27 October. In response to a question by LC, NC reported that plans were being put in place to ensure we make the best use of the money over the next three years. NC also provided an update on discussions with HM's Treasury on our request for enhanced financial freedoms.

3.3 JJ and SW provided a verbal update on the recruitment of a new Chair of the Board and noted there were minor delays to the timetable owing to refreshed DCMS advice on the process for sighting and involving Ministers. They were hopeful to have someone appointed before Christmas but were also considering alternative plans in case of further delay.

3.4 VJ provided an update on our Archives Sector Leadership work and verbally reported on the interim findings of the review. A need for The National Archives to more visibly deliver an advocacy role for the sector was a finding, particularly around highlighting the value, importance and benefits of archives. The impact of COVID-19 also featured in the findings. She agreed to bring a discussion paper to the next Board meeting.

3.5 MT provided an update on the Parliamentary Archives partnership project.

3.6 NC provided an update on the 'Change the way we work' programme and provided a summary of recent staff communications, particularly in relation to the start of new hybrid working patterns. He noted that a courtesy charter had been published. In response to a question by SC on levels of anxiety and questions from staff relating to hybrid working, NC noted that these were largely related to travelling by public transport rather than being on site at Kew.

3.7 The Board:

- (i) Received and noted the updates;
- (ii) Welcomed a discussion at the next meeting on the interim findings of the Archive Sector Leadership review; and
- (iii) Felt assured on the steps management were taking to support staff with hybrid working and expressed confidence in their ability to handle individual cases sensitively.

*Action by: VJ/AB*

#### 1921 Online Census – RAG Update

3.8 The Board was invited to note the update on the 1921 Census programme, including the public communications plan, and to discuss RAG ratings, progress and risks identified.

- 3.9 GMR was pleased to note that the public announcement by FindMyPast would be made on 27 October and that the story had secured press coverage, including BBC Morning Live, despite coinciding with the Budget announcement.
- 3.10 The pricing would also be announced on 27 October and was subject to further discussion with FindMyPast.
- 3.11 Following up from RS's question at the last meeting, GMR provided a verbal update on FindMyPast's international market reach and noted that announcements of the 1921 Census launch will be made with FindMyPast's genealogy and ancestry partners in Australia, Canada and the US.
- 3.12 The Board:
- (i) Welcomed and noted the project update and the latest RAG rating position;
  - (ii) Congratulated GMR and the team on their work on keeping the project on track, particularly during the ongoing pandemic; and
  - (iii) Asked that press releases and the mark-up of The National Archives' website pages be shared with them out-of-committee.

*Action by: GMR*

#### **4.0 Non-Executive Board Members' Updates**

- 4.1 Non-executive Board Members (NEBMs) each provided a verbal update on their recent activity, including insights from other organisations.
- 4.2 LC reported the following activities and updates:
- Filming an 'In conversation' with JJ which reflects back on her time as Chair
  - Meeting with the Activist Group reviewing our Sector Leadership role
  - Completing all, bar one, NEBM appraisals, including a discussion on priorities for the Audit and Risk Committee next year. She thanked everyone for providing commentary and giving examples
  - Attending the DCMS Chairs and CEO's meeting, which included the Comprehensive Spending Review and ministerial changes
  - Speaking at a Public Bodies event about her experience as an Arm's Length Body (ALB) chair and reflections on sponsorship arrangements and support.
- 4.3 SC and MR noted their induction meetings with GMR and AS.
- 4.4 RP noted his valuable interactions with NC and AS outside of meetings. He also reported on insights from other organisations in relation to supporting staff through 'coffee chat' initiatives, seeking more value from internal and external auditors and being more risk conscious and strengthening lines of defences through mapping exercises.
- 4.5 RS noted her briefing with JS on understanding trends in secondary legislation during the pandemic and had put him touch with the relevant team at the House of Lords. She had addressed new staff members at the Corporate Induction and attended two informative

presentations on making archives accessible and the Transfer of Digital Records, in addition to attending two of our What's online talks on the Great Fire of London and The Black Death.

4.6 The Board noted the updates.

## **5.0 Audit and Risk Committee Chair's Update**

5.1 RP provided a verbal update on the 6 September Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) meeting. The following main points were noted:

- commissioned a governance assurance map
- received a presentation from JS on business continuity and Cloud services and was assured the current arrangements were proportionate to the size of the organisation and risk exposure
- discussed procurement and effective contract management to spend money wisely and on time
- asked that supplier issues be kept on the Committee's agenda
- launched the self-assessment survey and agreed to include questions around internal and external auditors to allow us to draw the best out of them.

5.2 The Board

- (i) Received and noted the verbal update; and
- (ii) Received and noted the draft minutes of the 6 September meeting.

## **6.0 Corporate Reports**

### September Financials

6.1 The Board received the September financials report, which presented an underspend. The 6+6 financial forecast was being drafted and will provide a granular understanding of the budget and spending. NC and MK noted the potential impact of the Repository 0 (Rep0) refurbishment and the ERP project on the budget.

6.2 The Chair noted this was MK's last meeting before he left The National Archives and thanked him for his work and wished him well for the future.

### Quarter 2 Business Performance

6.3 The Board received the newly formatted business performance report for Quarter 2 and noted the items currently 'red' or 'amber' and the explanations behind them.

6.4 Early budget planning to give procurement headway to go out to tender and commit to spending on time was discussed.

6.5 The Board:

- (i) Noted the September Financials report;

- (ii) Noted the Quarter 2 Business Performance report;
- (iv) Endorsed the new format of the report and found the commentary presented helpful;
- (v) Suggested reviewing how objectives were being measured for those items that are 'red' and to identify if there was anything else, particularly outside our control, driving these; and
- (vi) Welcomed a progress update on the commercial strategy to drive forward some of the priorities.

*Action by: Executive Team*

## **7.0 Update on The National Archives Trust**

- 7.1 The Board received a summary of the report by consultants into the feasibility of a fundraising campaign for The National Archives Trust, based on priorities agreed in 2020.
- 7.2 EJA introduced the item and noted a recent positive meeting with the new Director of the Clore Duffield Foundation (CDF) and that the National Archives Digital Learning Centre will be discussed at the CDF Board meeting on 23rd November and, assuming they are happy with our plans, we would be looking to sign a formal funding agreement with them.
- 7.3 BB spoke about the consultant's report, progress since the report and the next steps and noted they were behind on the timetable. She highlighted that the Trust was working on messages to funders that it was an independent body from The National Archives.
- 7.4 VJ highlighted that there were a couple of areas where there was potential for working together, particularly around audience development and grants funding. In response, BB confirmed that she has been engaging with the Head of Archives Sector Development on projects that were sector focused and would be happy to meet the new Head of Grants when they were in post.
- 7.5 There was a discussion around the impact and changes to the grants funding landscape since the pandemic, particularly in relation to the priorities of the Trust. BB noted that although it was still too early to tell, the indication was that funders were prioritising recovery rather than supporting large capital projects and that digital and virtual programmes were welcomed.
- 7.6 BB was thanked for the update and left the meeting.
- 7.7 The Board:
  - (i) Welcomed the update;
  - (ii) Noted that BB will share the full consultant's report with MR; and
  - (iii) Suggested revisiting the risks to The National Archives in terms of its arm's length relationship with the Trust, balancing alignment whilst maintaining independence of the two organisations, and capturing these risks appropriately on the Corporate Risk Register.

*Action by: AS/Executive Team*

## **8.0 Review of the Records Collection Policy**

- 8.1 The Board received a paper setting out the conclusions of the initial review of our Records Collection Policy (RCP), the policy document that sets out what we collect, and our intended approach.
- 8.2 LF introduced the item and confirmed AF would be leading the review which would have an iterative approach and was an opportunity to fundamentally reimagine our collections policy and add our value to government facing audiences. AF added that there was potential to separate policy and practice which would make the document more meaningful.
- 8.3 In response to a question around resources to deliver the project, the Board noted that AF had mobilised an internal team of experts.
- 8.4 VJ and JS expressed their support for the project and noted that collection practice comes up in our work with the archives sector. JS added this was an opportunity to move minds away from government paper records to collections of historic or cultural value, which could be in various formats, including digital.
- 8.5 MR queried if the review will cover commercial implications and releasing secondary value from collections, particularly through licensing and digital. In response, LF said the next stage would be to look at what is included in the policy.
- 8.6 The Board:
- (i) Fully endorsed the review of the collections policy; and
  - (ii) Asked to be kept updated via the Executive Team Update report.

*Action by: LF*

## **9.0 Update on the Board Effectiveness Action Plan**

- 9.1 The Board received an update on progress on the 2021-22 Board Effectiveness Action Plan and noted the items not on track and the reasons behind these.
- 9.2 The Board:
- (i) Noted the progress report;
  - (ii) Were reminded to share suggestions for further activities with the Head of Governance;
  - (iii) Welcomed a return to in-person meetings with the option to join virtually; and
  - (iv) Agreed to delay the launch of the 2022 self-assessment survey until the new Chair had been appointed and has had a few months to settle into their role.

*Action by: AB*

## **10.0 Strategic Discussion on Refreshing our International Strategy**

- 10.1 The Board received a paper setting out the proposed direction for refreshing our international strategy, which aligns to *Archives for Everyone* and the UK Government's *Global Britain* policy and proceeded to have a detailed strategic discussion on the context of our current position internationally, the proposed approach and the content, priorities and tone of the emerging strategy as presented.

10.2 The majority of the comments centred around:

- the tone and language of the document
- alignment with *Global Britain*
- relevance to our non-domestic/international audiences
- identifying our uniqueness and what we do differently/well
- the need for the strategy to be outcome focused with purpose and defined objectives
- opportunities to enhance our sector leadership position and role
- ensuring alignment with other key corporate documents i.e. commercial strategy
- opportunities to work with other archives and/or the broader cultural/heritage/academia sectors
- Acknowledging our multi-audiences and complexities
- Recognising the responsibility of holding collections which are contested but important to world history.

10.3 SW and the Head of International and External Affairs thanked the Board for the useful discussion and agreed to revisit the document, particularly in relation to tone and language and to return to the February Board meeting for a further discussion.

10.4 The Board:

- (i) Welcomed the discussion;
- (ii) Suggested revisiting the themes; and
- (iii) Looked forward to seeing the next iteration at the February meeting.

*Action by: SW/HoIEA*

## **11.0 Any Other Business**

### Forward Work Programme

11.1 The Board reviewed the Forward Work Programme for Board meetings.

11.2 The Board agreed to add SW's strategic paper to the November meeting, an update on ERP to the January meeting and refreshing the International Strategy to the February 2022 meeting.

*Action by: AB*

**There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 14.08**