

Full Minutes of The National Archives' Board		THE
		NATIONAL
Held on 18 January 2022 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 (Items 1-4)  
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  
Valerie Johnson (VJ) Director of Research and Collections  
Gemma Maclagan Ram (GMR) Commercial Director  
Andrea Metcalf (AM) Director of People, Inclusion and Change  
John Sheridan (JS) Digital Director  
Aaron Smith (AS) Corporate Services Director

**Also present:**

Asha Bagayat (AB) Head of Governance (Minutes)  
Adrian Butler (AdB) Interim Head of Finance (Item 6)  
Alex Forbes (AF) Head of Government Services (Item 9)  
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 SC submitted her apologies for leaving the meeting early due to a diary clash.
- 1.2 RS declared an interest in the Parliamentary Archives partnership project (Item 3) as a former member of the Parliamentary Restorations and Renewal Committee. 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 25 November 2021 were approved as a correct record.
- 2.2 There were no matters arising.
- 2.3 The Board reviewed the Actions Log and received an update on latest discussions with DCMS with regards to signing off the Framework Agreement.

### **3.0 Executive Team Update**

- 3.1 The Board received a report on Executive Team activities.
- 3.2 NC led on introducing the update on COVID-19 and staff and services at Kew. LF provided the latest reading room figures and highlighted that walk-ins were steadily increasing. EJA spoke about the work of the Welcome Team and that fewer non-readers had been visiting the site over the Christmas period. The Café had been closed between 29-31 December and booked readers had been informed of this via email.
- 3.3 AM reported on staff absence (both sickness and leave) over the Christmas period and its impact on public services. There had been a spike in COVID-19 related absence in December. However, there was a question of whether there was underreporting amongst staff working from home, which will be picked up as part of the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) project.
- 3.4 AM also provided the headlines from the Staff Survey results, noting that hybrid working and concerns about returning to the office featured in the free text comments. She agreed to bring a paper on the staff survey results to the 22 March Board meeting. In response, SC provided insights from the private sector on staff engagement and pandemic related changes in the labour market, including fatigue and turnover, and that employers were providing more flexibility and certainty to staff to remain attractive within the labour market.
- 3.5 MT provided a verbal update on the latest developments in the two legal cases against the Government relating to the use of auto-deletion messaging services and use of private email accounts.
- 3.6 JJ provided an update on the recruitment of the Chair of The National Archives' Board.

#### **1921 Census Launch**

- 3.7 GMR provided a detailed verbal update on the launch of the 1921 Census, including widespread media coverage (over 1,000 pieces), figures on transcription and image views from the first 4 days, estimated revenue income and the general buzz and excitement around Kew on 6 January. She praised all staff behind the launch and noted that the list was already coming up to over 100 people, demonstrating the cross-organisational impact and contribution. There have been some negative tweets and correspondence to FindMyPast and MPs relating to access and charging, some of which had been copied to LC. Findmypast confirmed that user identified corrections were being actioned, where appropriate, as soon as possible and that 97% of accepted customer corrections have been made.
- 3.8 RS noted the criticisms relating to the transcription, and felt that charging was a defensible position. All congratulated the team on the huge impact and reach of the launch.
- 3.9 EJA provided an update on preparations for the press viewing of the 1920s Exhibition and its opening later that week, including an outline of the online events programme.
- 3.10 The Board:

- (i) Received and noted the updates;
- (ii) Looked forward to receiving a report on the staff survey results at its March meeting; and
- (iii) Congratulated the 1921 Census Launch team.

#### **4.0 Non-Executive Board Member Updates**

- 4.1 Non-executive Board Members (NEBMs) each provided a verbal update on their recent activity, including insights from other organisations.
- 4.2 All Non-executive Board members had participated in the Nominations and Governance Committee meeting on 9 December 2021.
- 4.3 LC provided an update on her activities, including external engagements with the Cabinet Office and the Public Chair's Forum Annual Conference. She also noted her discussions with NC regarding arrangements for communicating with NEBMs and sought volunteers to trial the proposed new solution.
- 4.4 SC noted her induction meeting with AM, speaking at the December Corporate Induction for new staff members, and participating in further meetings with AM and VJ and their respective teams on the development of an archives apprenticeship programme and our archives sector leadership role in the context of inclusivity.
- 4.5 MR noted his induction meeting with AM and attending the December Audit and Risk Committee meeting.
- 4.6 RS reported on attending several what's online events and searching the 1921 Census.
- 4.7 RP noted receiving the meetings pack for the DCMS ARC Chair's Forum and outlined key points from the agenda.
- 4.8 MR, RS and RP recorded their participation in the MoD Service Records Working Group and noted the meeting had been helpful to understand the scale and complexity of the project and its cross-organisational implications.
- 4.9 The Board:
  - (i) Noted the updates; and
  - (ii) NEBMs wishing to take part in the trial of new communication arrangements were asked to submit their interest to NC.

*Action by: All NEBMs*

- 4.10 SC left the meeting at the conclusion of the item.

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

- 5.1 RP provided an update on the 3 December Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) meeting. He noted the introduction of pre-briefing sessions from NAO on live topics and issues, which wider-Board

members were welcome to attend. He also reported on the self-assessment survey results, which concluded the Committee was generally performing well.

5.2 The Board:

- (i) Received and noted the verbal update; and
- (ii) Received and noted the draft minutes of the 3 December meeting and notes from the NAO pre-briefing session.

## 6.0 Corporate Reports

### November Financials

6.1 The Board received the November Monthly Financial Report, which presented an increased underspend.

6.2 In response to questions, AS outlined the uncertainties and risks to the end of year budget, including mitigating steps being taken to actively manage the position.

### Quarter 3 Business Priorities

6.3 The Board received the Quarter 3 Business Performance update, which reported on progress in year two of the Strategic Intent.

6.4 NC introduced the report and highlighted the items with an amber and red rating. LC queried the status of Project ETNA and its risks and, noting that the Board will be receiving a project update at its 22 February meeting, encouraged management to review resource allocation to ensure key public facing projects were delivered on time.

6.5 The Board:

- (i) Noted the November Financial Report;
- (ii) Received and noted the Quarter 3 Business Priorities update; and
- (iii) Looked forward to receiving an update on Project ETNA at its next meeting.

## 7.0 Conflicts of Interest Policy for Board Members

7.1 The Board was presented with a draft conflicts of interest policy for Board members. The policy intends to maintain the integrity and impartiality of decision-makers and provide assurance that any conflicts of interest, whether actual or perceived, do not present risks to the impartiality of The National Archives' activities, or reputational risks.

7.2 The Board:

- (i) Welcomed the draft policy and agreed a delegation to the Audit and Risk Committee for its annual review;

- (ii) Asked for the handling of non-compliance with the policy to be reviewed and updated in consultation with JJ and LC;
- (iii) Subject to the above amendment, agreed to receive the updated policy for write-round approval and adoption; and
- (iv) Noted the discussions on the conflicts of interest policy for staff and managers and updating this in line with best practice in due course;

*Action by: JJ/LC/AB*

## **8.0 Production of the 2021-22 Annual Report and Accounts**

8.1 The Board reviewed the production timetable for the 2021-22 Annual Report and Accounts and discussed what The National Archives may want to achieve from its Annual Report in terms of strategic themes and the expected audience and engagement, to inform the production of the narrative and structure.

8.2 The Board:

- (i) Noted the project team responsible for producing this year's Annual Report and Accounts;
- (ii) Reviewed the production schedule and endorsed the aimed laying date; and
- (iii) Agreed the narrative should provide a record of all that has been achieved and delivered during the ongoing pandemic, including the 1921 Census Launch and free digital downloads service.

*Action by: AB*

## **9.0 MoD Service Personnel Records Transfer – Quarterly Project Update**

9.1 The Board received a major project update on the transfer of circa 10 million Ministry of Defence (MoD) service personnel records to The National Archives for strategic oversight and assurance.

9.2 LF introduced the report and thanked the NEBMs for their participation in the Working Group and the opportunity to set out to them the size and complexity of the project. GMR provided an update on the procurement of a project partner, including estimated timescales.

9.3 RS asked where the NEBMs can specifically add value and contribute to the project. In response, LF noted that support with developing and testing access arrangements for the records would be particularly welcomed.

9.4 Assurances were provided on the funding for the project, including support from HM Treasury for multi-year budgeting and on our relationship with MoD, which is set out in a memorandum of understanding. Commercial opportunities and information rights issues were also noted.

9.5 The Board:

- (i) Received and noted the progress update;
- (ii) Agreed that the records should be released in tranches; and

- (iii) Endorsed the next steps set out in the report, relating to Board engagement and oversight.

*Action by: LF/AF*

## **10.0 Board Forward Programme 2022**

- 10.1 The Board received a paper setting out a defined Forward Programme for 2022 of key strategic discussions, specifically framed around *Archives for Everyone* and in anticipation of work in 2022-23 to develop a new four-year business plan.
- 10.2 The Board:
  - (i) Welcomed and agreed its Forward Programme for 2022;
  - (ii) Agreed that discussions around the environment and sustainability should take place, perhaps at the September strategy session and noted that sustainability will feature in the digital discussion at its February meeting; and
  - (ii) Noted that a first discussion on the Kew site and storage will be included in the September strategy session.

*Action by: SW/AB*

## **11.0. Any Other Business**

- 11.1 There were no items of any other business.

### Items for information

- 11.2 The Board received and noted two items for information: Talk-December Issue and an externally produced presentation on Online hygiene for NEDs on cyber security.

**There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 13.59**