

Minutes of The National Archives' Board		THE
		NATIONAL
Held on 22 February 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
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:

Andrew Holden, Consultant at Activist Group (Item 4)
Asha Bagayat (AB) Head of Governance (Minutes)
Matthew Bell (MB) Head of Legislation Services (Item 11)
Adrian Butler (AdB) Interim Head of Finance (Item 9)
Catherine Elliott (CE) Head of Digital Services (Items 3 and 10)
Tina Morton (TM) Interim Head of Archives Sector Development (Item 4)
Sonia Ranade (SR) Head of Digital Archiving (Item 3)
Sam Whaley (SW) Head of Strategy and CEO's Office (Item 11)
Head of International and External Affairs (Item 5)
Senior Designer (Item 10)
Strategy, Governance and Gazette Manager (Item 11)

1.0 Apologies and Declarations of Interest

- 1.1 There were no apologies for absence.
- 1.2 LC declared a new interest as she will be appointed as a Non-executive Director of Public Digital Ltd and Public Digital Holdings Ltd from 1 April 2022. 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 18 January 2022 were approved as a correct record.

2.2 Under matters arising, the Board received a verbal update on a request to deposit a private collection at The National Archives. The Board asked to be kept updated on the matter via the Executive Team update report.

Action by: EJA

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 and other outstanding actions being led by the Head of Governance.

3.0 Strategic Discussion: Digital Strategy

3.1 The Board participated in a structured strategic discussion and was invited to contribute its views around the main themes to be addressed in The National Archives' next Digital Strategy, which is one of the main strategies that sits underneath *Archives for Everyone*. The aim of the Digital Strategy will be to set out The National Archives' perspective and position as a digital archive, with a ten year horizon. Within that context, it will aim to elaborate on the *Archives for Everyone* themes of inclusion, entrepreneurship and disruption.

3.2 JS introduced the session, supported by SR and CE. To frame the discussions, the Board received a paper presenting four propositions. The Board was then divided into two breakout groups for a facilitated discussion, which was noted separately. At the end of the facilitated session, the Board regrouped to share their reflections.

3.3 The Board:

- (i) Welcomed the strategic session and thanked JS for his excellent paper, which had aided the discussions;
- (ii) Was broadly supportive of the four propositions; and
- (iii) Noted that a draft strategy document will be developed in light of the direction and feedback received and will be presented to Board at its 26 May meeting.

Action by: JS

4.0 Strategic Discussion: Archives Sector Leadership Model

4.1 Following discussion at the 25 November 2021 meeting on the interim findings of the review of The National Archives' archives sector leadership role, the Board was presented with the full consultant's report, along with management's responses to the recommendations.

4.2 The Board welcomed TM as Interim Head of Archives Sector Development. VJ introduced the item.

4.3 Andrew Holden from Activist Group joined the meeting and verbally presented the main themes and key points emerging from the review and subsequent recommendations. He then invited questions.

4.4 In response to questions, Andrew Holden confirmed there was a good understanding of The National Archives' status as a non-ministerial government department amongst those with long standing relationships with the organisation, however this was less apparent amongst community archive organisations or in the sectors where we were still forming relationships. He

expressed a good level of confidence in the findings owing to the targeted interviews and noted that the free text responses were broadly consistent with what people were saying in the focus groups and interviews. Finally, whilst the review did not specifically speak to users of archive services, it did cover the impact upon end users and found that our accreditation and work force development activities were positive examples of indirect benefits to end users.

4.5 Andrew Holden then left the meeting with the thanks of the Board.

4.6 A discussion on the proposed refreshed approach ensued.

4.7 The Board:

- (i) Received and noted the findings of the Activist Group report;
- (ii) Considered how we might communicate the findings from the report whilst focussing on our future offer to the sector;
- (iii) Endorsed the proposed refreshed approach to our sector leadership role;
- (iv) Noted that a detailed proposal will be brought back to its July meeting; and
- (v) Agreed to include Jeff's visits to archives sector organisations in the ET update report to Board.

Action by: VJ/TM

5.0 International Strategy: *Archives for Everywhere*

5.1 Following an initial discussion at the 22 October 2021 meeting, the Board was presented with a refreshed International Strategy for adoption that aligns closely to *Archives for Everyone*, while being cognisant of emerging UK Government policy. The strategy seeks to shape and position The National Archives' next international aims, including how we will collaborate with others, while cohesively capturing what we learn going forward to track our progress and inform our base of (domestic and international) strategic insights, to be reviewed by 2025.

5.2 JJ introduced the item and noted the strategy contained our vision and high level ambitions. The Head of International and External Affairs, added that a detailed delivery plan will be produced once the budgeting process was complete and resourcing requirements were clearer. The Board was then invited to comment on the draft.

5.3 The Board:

- (i) Welcomed, reviewed and endorsed the refreshed International Strategy, *Archives for Everywhere*;
- (ii) Noted that the strategy will be launched both internally and externally by the end of March 2022; and
- (iii) Noted the opportunity to revisit the delivery of the strategy at the September Board strategy session under discussions of the four-year business plan.

Action by: HofIEA

POST MEETING NOTE: Given the current situation in Ukraine, JJ has suggested the strategy

undergoes a soft launch in March, followed by an official launch at the ICA Roma Conference in September.

6.0 Executive Team Updates

- 6.1 The Board received a report on Executive Team activities.
- 6.2 NC provided a verbal update on the Government's latest COVID-19 announcement and ending of all restrictions and our initial response to them and staff communications. He invited insights on what other organisations were doing to help inform our next steps.
- 6.3 GMR reported the good news that two members of staff had been accepted on a British Council-led cultural trip to Saudi Arabia in early March.
- 6.4 EJA provided the latest income figures on 'Pay what you can' from online events.
- 6.5 JJ provided an update on the recruitment of the Chair of The National Archives' Board.
- 6.6 The Board:
 - (i) Received and noted the updates;
 - (ii) Welcomed the list of key stakeholder and strategic meetings attended by the Directors.

7.0 Non-executive Board Member Verbal Updates

- 7.1 Non-executive Board Members (NEBMs) each provided a verbal update on their recent activity, including insights from other organisations.
- 7.2 LC provided an update on her activities, including external engagements (i) the Institute for Government roundtable with the new Public Appointments Commissioner and (ii) Cabinet Office consultation on the Public Bodies Reform Programme and noted the key tools being introduced around sponsorship arrangements and increasing government oversight and assurance of arm's length bodies.
- 7.3 SC noted her involvement in reviewing the job description and person specification of the new Head of Equity, Inclusion and Diversity role.
- 7.4 MR noted speaking at the corporate induction for new staff and attending the February Audit and Risk Committee meeting.
- 7.5 RS reported on her visit to Kew and meetings with VJ, LF and JS.
- 7.6 RP noted insights from other boards, particularly around assurance and risk management.
- 7.7 The Board noted the updates.

8.0 Audit and Risk Committee Chair's Update

- 8.1 RP provided an update on the 4 February Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) meeting and noted the insightful pre-briefing session run by BDO (Internal Auditors) on corporate failures, which covered skills balance amongst trustees, safeguarding and risk management. He also highlighted discussions around the governance assurance map and income reporting on the 1920s Census launch from the main meeting.
- 8.2 The Board:
- (i) Received and noted the verbal update; and
 - (ii) Received and noted the draft minutes of the 4 February meeting and notes from the pre-briefing session.

9.0 Corporate Reports

- 9.1 The Board received the December 2021 and January 2022 Monthly Financial Reports, which presented an increased underspend.
- 9.2 AS introduced the reports and noted the steps being taken to actively manage the underspend position.
- 9.3 The Board acknowledged the impact of the pandemic, challenges with recruitment (particularly digital skills), supply chain issues and constraints of capital and revenue spending on the budget and noted that insights from other public sector boards was presenting a similar situation.
- 9.4 The Board:
- (i) Noted the December and January Financial Reports.

10.0 Update on Project ETNA

- 10.1 The Board received a progress update on Project ETNA (Explore The Nation's Archives), which is a major project on developing a new website for The National Archives.
- 10.2 CE and the Senior Designer introduced the item and gave a presentation, which included a preview demonstration of the capabilities of the 'new search' functionality of The National Archives' catalogue.
- 10.3 There was a detailed discussion on resourcing and opportunities of using the Digital, Data and Technology (DDaT) framework to identify and secure specialist skills required to deliver this key business priority. LC added that the framework offered retention and remuneration tools, which were worth exploring. However, JS expressed caution noting the incredibly commercial digital skills recruitment landscape.
- 10.4 LC also queried the Digital Downloads service (currently free) and progress on discussions on whether to re-introduce charging, including the shaping of a minimum viable product and financial modelling to support the decision-making on this. In response, GMR outlined the options, which had been presented to the Executive Team late last year, but that further work

was still required. RS noted that charging might exclude people that cannot afford the fee and suggested exploring a model whereby content could be available, for example, in local libraries for people to access for free. EJA noted the value of data and its third party use (with permissions), which could be explored.

10.5 The Board:

- (i) Received and noted the progress update;
- (ii) Noted that the public Beta was expected to be completed at the end of Q2 in the business year 2022/23 and looked forward receiving a further update later in the year (cJuly).

Action by: JS

11.0 Lawmaker Live Service

11.1 The Board received a paper providing an update on progress with *Lawmaker*, a shared service delivered by the Legislation Drafting, Amending and Publish Project (LDAPP), which after three years of development has been rolled out as a fully operational service from January 2022. The service has entered a transitional period, requiring a different operating model with a new Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the partners.

11.2 In response to questions from RS around the use of the software tool, JS said that further work was required to roll it out more widely, which will take c2-3 years. A user group of drafters has been set up, which includes clerks, to receive live feedback on the tool and make improvements and has already highlighted the need for user education.

11.3 RP noted that the Audit and Risk Committee had received a paper on the service and praised the team on its detailed risk assessment. The Committee was provided with further assurances around financial risks, noting that the agreement was for full cost recovery to be shared by the partners and thus reducing our exposure. This will be monitored by the governance arrangements set out in the new MoU.

11.4 The Board:

- (i) Welcomed the update and felt the tool was a step towards improving the drafting of government legislation and applying consistency and style, therefore making the law clearer;
- (ii) Noted that the Welsh Government was not currently a partner;
- (iii) Agreed the longer term direction that The National Archives operates and further develops *Lawmaker*. This involves providing a small service team and procuring the next contract to maintain and develop the product; and
- (iv) Reviewed and endorsed the draft Memorandum of Understanding between the partners, setting out the arrangements for operating the live service *Lawmaker*.

Action by: JS/CE

12.0. Board Effectiveness Survey Results

12.1 The Board was presented with the results of the 2021 self-assessment survey and invited to note those questions where there has been significant change from the 2020 results and where

there were areas of difference between the Executive Team and Non-executive Board Members.

12.2 Overall, there was praise for the functioning of the Board and recognition that the results were reflective of the 'moment in time' following a period of transition and change with new members joining and an increase in its size and also owing to the constraints of remote working for a second year running. There was a general view to keep the areas of difference between the Executive Team and Non-executive Board members under review and for the new Chair to move things forward when they arrive.

12.3 The Board:

- (i) Received and noted the survey results;
- (ii) Felt that the results were largely positive and reflected evidence of a high performing Board during a period of transition and change and uncertainty, which should not be lost sight of;
- (iii) Noted an increasing appetite to have robust/challenging conversations as the organisation matures and that these first needed to take place at the Executive Team level;
- (iv) Agreed to keep in review the areas of difference between the Executive Team and Non-executive Board Members;
- (v) Received and reviewed the 2021 Board Effectiveness Action Plan for items to carry forward into the 2022 Board Effectiveness Action Plan;
- (vi) Agreed to task the new Chair to further review the results when they arrive and, in conjunction with the Head of Governance, present a draft action plan at a future meeting for discussion and agreement; and
- (vii) Warmly praised LC for her superb chairing, leadership and contributions.

Action by: AB

13.0 Any Other Business

Forward Work Programme

13.1 The Board reviewed the Forward Work Programme for Board meetings and endorsed the suggestion to separate the May ARC and Board meeting and not have them on the same day from 2023 onwards.

Action by: AB

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 15.44