

Public Minutes of The National Archives' Board		THE
		NATIONAL
Held on 28 April 2022 at 10:00 at The National Archives, Kew and via Video Conference (VC)		ARCHIVES

**Present:**

Andrew Wathey (AW - Chair) Chair of The National Archives' Board  
Sonia Cargan (SC) Non-executive Board Member (via VC from Items 1-5)  
Rommel Pereira (RP) Non-executive Board Member (via VC from Item 5 onwards)  
Mark Richards (MR) Non-executive Board Member  
Ros Scott (RS) Non-executive Board Member (via VC)  
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 (via VC)

**Also present:**

Asha Bagayat (AB) Head of Governance (Minutes)  
Natalie Wright (NW) Editorial Assistant (via VC for Item 8)  
Sam Whaley (SW) Head of Strategy and CEO's Office

**1.0 Introductory remarks by the new Chair, Apologies and Declarations of Interest**

- 1.1 AW welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave a few words of introduction as the new Chair of the Board, highlighting his experience, praise for the work of The National Archives and looking ahead at how the Board can contribute to delivering the organisation's strategic vision, as set out in *Archives for Everyone*.
- 1.2 Apologies for lateness were received from RP and from SC for having to leave the meeting early, owing to diary clashes.
- 1.3 RS declared an interest in the Parliamentary Archives partnership project (Item 4) as a former member of the Parliamentary Restorations and Renewal Committee. There were no further declarations of interest.

**2.0 Strategic Discussion: Commercial Strategy**

- 2.1 The Board received a paper and presentation providing a brief review of progress on the 2017 Commercial Strategy, including an assessment of our current position, and an outline on the future direction and development of the of the 2022 commercial strategy. The Board was invited

to comment on the four strands of the proposed new strategic plan and management's assessment of the challenges, opportunities and risks set out for each of them.

2.2 There was a discussion on: commercial ambition and openness to new markets, beyond the traditional history and humanities audiences; ensuring the new commercial strategy links with The National Archives' strategy *Archives for Everyone*, as well as the International strategy; and undertaking an analysis, identifying gaps and developing a commercial offer for other countries. Linkages with the Culture programme were also noted.

2.3 The Board:

- (i) Welcomed the initial discussion and thanked GMR for her paper and presentation;
- (ii) Noted the importance of the Board's oversight in the development of the strategy, to drive forward and support the scale of the ambitions and provide input on risk and ethics issues in initiatives and opportunities; and
- (iii) Noted that a draft commercial strategy will be presented to the Board at its 19 July meeting for adoption.

*Action by: GMR*

### **3.0 Update on the New Strategic Approach to Research**

3.1 The Board received an update on the new strategic approach to research at The National Archives, which was adopted in April 2021 to actively and purposefully support the delivery of its strategic vision, *Archives for Everyone*, and achieve our strategic intent to realise the value of archives through research and innovation.

3.2 There was a discussion on people and HR considerations in relation to implementing the change in attitudes towards research.

3.3 The Board:

- (i) Welcomed the update, noting the reasons for some delays in progress;
- (ii) Endorsed the direction of travel and next steps as set out in the report; and
- (iii) Encouraged the articulation of a more ambitious longer-term goal.

*Action by: VJ*

### **4.0 Executive Team Updates**

4.1 The Board received a report on Executive Team activities.

4.2 An update on record series FCO141 – files relating to the migrated archives – which have been temporarily removed from ordering was provided.

4.3 At this point, RP joined the meeting.

4.4 There was a discussion around recruitment and recent comments for civil servants to return to the office, which was causing some concern amongst some staff. The Board noted that flexibility and choice was important in the current recruitment market, particularly for securing digital skills, and that we awaited further direction from DCMS on this.

4.5 The Board received and noted the Executive Team updates and received assurance on the launch of the Find Case Law service.

## **5.0 Non-executive Board Member Verbal Updates**

5.1 Non-executive Board Members (NEBMs) each provided a verbal update on their recent activities, including insights from other organisations.

5.2 SC noted her regular meetings with AM and upcoming involvement in the sifting (short-listing) of the new Head of Equity, Inclusion and Diversity role, which is shortly going out to advert. She then left the meeting.

5.3 RS noted attending the Archives Accreditation ceremony at Bradford.

5.4 RP noted speaking at the staff induction and an upcoming DCMS Arm's Length Body Audit and Risk Committee Chair's Forum, which will be focusing on cyber risks. He also provided insights from an independent governance review at another Board, noting the importance of a governance assurance map and lines of defences for risk management.

5.5 AW noted his various induction meetings, and an upcoming meeting with George Freeman MP, Minister for Science, Research and Innovation and Dame Ottoline Leyser, Chief Executive of UKRI, and it was agreed that a briefing note on The National Archives' relationship with BEIS/UKRI would be helpful.

*Action by: AB*

5.6 The Board noted the updates.

## **6.0 Corporate Reports**

### March Financial Report

6.1 The Board received the March 2022 Monthly Financial Report, which presented an increased underspend since the last report, and noted the reasons behind this and the steps being taken to improve the reporting and internal control mechanisms going forwards, including lessons learned.

6.2 The Board:

- (i) Noted the March Financial Report;
- (iv) Agreed that a lessons learned exercise would be conducted;
- (v) Agreed that a report around financial governance, including ERP would be presented to the next Audit and Risk Committee for assurance.

*Action by: NC/AS*

### Q4 Business Performance

6.3 The Board received the Quarter 4 Business Performance update, which reported on progress in

year two of the Strategic Intents, and noted the amber and red ratings and the reasons behind them.

6.4 There was a discussion around our ambition and the impact of the external environment on our ability to deliver some of the strategic intents fully. The Executive Team would be holding a discussion on this at its away day in July to inform the development of the next set of strategic business priorities.

6.5 The Board:

- (i) Noted and endorsed the Q4 Business Performance report.

## **7.0 2021-22 Annual Report and Accounts: First Draft and Project Update**

7.1 The Board was invited to comment on the first draft of the Annual Report and Accounts 2021-22 and received an update on the project plan.

7.2 The Board:

- (i) Received and reviewed the first draft of the annual report;
- (ii) Noted that the Project Team will incorporate its comments into the next iteration;
- (iii) Endorsed the tone and narrative and felt it was an accurate record of our performance during the ongoing pandemic and brought out the breadth of the work the organisation undertakes;
- (iv) Suggested producing a separate document from a fundraising perspective, which was more celebratory of our achievements; and
- (v) Received assurance that the production timetable was on track.

## **8.0 Minutes, Matters Arising and Action Log**

8.1 Subject to minor amendments, the minutes of the meeting held on 22 March 2022 were approved as a correct record.

8.2 The Board reviewed the Actions Log.

## **9.0 Any Other Business**

9.1 The Board noted the plans and timetable to approve the next four year business plan 2023-27, which would require Board's sign off towards the end of this year.

### Forward Work Programme

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

**There being no further business, the meeting closed at 16.08**