

Minutes of The National Archives' Board		THE	
		NATIONAL	
Held on 17 October 2023 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 (Items 1-6)
 Rommel Pereira (RP) Non-executive Board Member
 Ros Scott (RS) Non-executive Board Member
 Emmajane Avery (EJA) Director of Public Engagement and Sector Leadership
 Neil Curtis (MC) Chief Operating Officer
 Lucy Fletcher (LF) Director for Public Records Access and Government Services
 Jeff James (JJ) Chief Executive and Keeper
 Gemma Maclagan Ram, Research and Commercial Development Director
 Andrea Metcalf (AM) Director of People, Inclusion and Change
 John Sheridan (JS) Digital Director

Also present:

Asha Bagayat (AB) Head of Governance (Minutes)
 Beth Brunton (BB) Head of Development (Item 4)
 Tao Chang (TC) Associate Director Infrastructure & Major Programmes, Arts and Humanities Research Council (Item 6 via VC)
 Paul Davies (PD) Consultant (Item 10)
 Tadas Khazanavicius (TK) Executive Director, The National Archives Trust (Item 2)
 David Lough (DL) Acting Chair, The National Archives Trust (Item 2)
 Marie Twomey-McLeod (MTM) Head of Finance (Item 9)

1.0 Apologies and Declarations of Interest

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Mark Richards (MR) Non-executive Board Member. SC submitted apologies for leaving early owing to a diary clash. There were no further apologies for absence.

1.2 There were no declarations of interest.

2.0 Annual Update from The National Archives Trust

2.1 AW welcomed DL and TK to the meeting.

2.2 DL provided an update on the Trust, thanking The National Archives for their grant funding. He outlined the fundraising priorities of the Trust as set out in their new strategy and also noted the challenges it was facing, particularly around the funding landscape. Assurances were provided that by this time next year the Trust will be in a better position to judge the delivery of its fundraising priorities and alignment with *Archives for Everyone*.

2.3 TK outlined the eight project proposals and where the Trust was working closely with The

National Archives and looking to utilise connections, including those of The National Archives' Board. He thanked teams at The National Archives, especially Education and Outreach for their support and noted working with GMR on streamlining the process for delivering projects.

2.4 The Board welcomed the update: thought it was encouraging and received assurance on the governance of the Trust. A suggestion was made for the Trust to look at synergies and opportunities to collaborate with the higher education sector to deliver its projects and fundraising priorities.

2.5 AW thanked DL and TK for their update, who then left the meeting.

3.0 Letter from Rt Hon Lucy Frazer MP, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport

3.1 The Board received a paper outlining how The National Archives' activities were supporting and contributing to the delivery of the DCMS four priority areas: data, youth, environment and sustainability and levelling up. This work was undertaken following the receipt of a letter from Rt. Hon Lucy Frazer MP, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport and a preliminary discussion at the 18 July Board meeting.

3.2 NC introduced the item and thanked the Interim Head of Strategic Insights for working with colleagues across the organisation to pull the paper together. Overall, he noted that we were in a good position, and as a non-ministerial department had a positive narrative to share on alignment with the DCMS priorities. However, there were some areas that were not so firmly featured in our strategic vision *Archives for Everyone*.

3.3 Generally, the Board welcomed the paper as a useful exercise to appraise areas of our activity, which also support and deliver ministerial priorities. The subsequent discussion centred around the gaps and next steps, and the following main points were noted:

- Data: it was noted that detailed metrics were being produced, however if we wanted to do more then we needed to consider building in statistician capability within our workforce plan.
- Youth: our education and schools programme was praised, however more could be done around talent and career pathways and incorporating digital preservation within the education program.
- Environmental and Sustainability: there were many positives to share, including the increased energy efficiency rating of the building at Kew, and opportunities to surface our research and preservation capabilities.
- Levelling up: opportunities of regional engagement through the partnership project were noted. More could also be stated around the emotional space we are creating and giving people a sense of belonging through the diversification of our exhibitions and programmes.

3.4 The Board:

- (i) Received and noted the report and felt it had been a useful exercise;

- (ii) Agreed JJ's Office should liaise with the Sponsorship team at DCMS on the expectation around a response to the original letter; and
- (iii) Agreed that if a response was to be sent then this should be kept brief and sent by JJ as management's response.

Action by: AB/JJ

4.0 Clore Learning Centre Phase 2

- 4.1 The Board received a paper providing detailed analysis, including obligations to the Clore Duffield Foundation (Clore) and options, including costs, benefits and risks to The National Archives to deliver Phase II of the Clore Learning Centre at Kew. An initial paper was presented to the Board at its 20 May meeting.
- 4.2 EA reported on her meeting with the Director of the Clore Duffield Foundation, about our preferred option for the future of Phase II and noted that they had taken a pragmatic view and would take it to their Board meeting at the end of November.
- 4.3 The Board:
 - (i) Welcomed the paper and endorsed option C and
 - (ii) Agreed that EJA would provide an update on the outcome of the Clore Board meeting.

Action by: EJA

5.0 Governance Update

- 5.1 Following the conclusion of the external Board effectiveness review and subsequent discussion of its recommendations at the Strategy day on 20 September, the Board was presented with a draft Board Effectiveness Action Plan for agreement. The Board was also presented with draft terms of references of The National Archives' Board, Audit and Risk Committee, Nominations and Governance Committee and the newly created Finance and Performance Committee for review and agreement.
- 5.2 The Board:
 - (i) Reviewed and agreed the 2023-24 Board Effectiveness Action Plan and noted and endorsed progress to date on delivering the Action Plan;
 - (ii) Agreed to undertake the next Board effectiveness review in July 2024 to allow the current Action Plan to be implemented;
 - (iii) Reviewed the updated terms of reference for The National Archives' Board and asked the Head of Governance to incorporate its comments and share an updated draft out-of-committee for agreement;
 - (iv) Reviewed and agreed the terms of reference of the Nominations and Governance Committee; and
 - (v) Reviewed and in principle agreed the terms of reference of the Audit and Risk Committee and the newly created Finance and Performance Committee, subject to their further review by the Committees at their next meeting (December 2023 and

January 2024 respectively), following which the whole suite of documents will be brought back to Board (February 2024) for agreement and publication on the website.

Action by: AB

6.0 Guest Speaker

- 6.1 Tao Chang, Associate Director, Infrastructure & Major Programmes was invited and gave a presentation on digital infrastructure at the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). She also outlined the organisation's funding landscape and scale of initiatives and thanked The National Archives for its help and support and encouragement.
- 6.2 Following her presentation, the Board was invited to ask questions. These centred around how funding decisions are made at AHRC and the challenges of digitisation, including economic value and opportunities for collaborating and creating online content for educational institutions.
- 6.3 At this point SC left the meeting.
- 6.4 On behalf of the Board, AW thanked Tao Chang for attending the meeting, noting that she had nicely set the scene for the next item on the agenda.

7.0 Digitisation Framework/Principles

- 7.1 The Board was presented with a paper setting out our digitisation principles and the complexities regarding our operating 'guardrails'. This was following a commission at the 21 June meeting aimed to provide Board with oversight and assurance regarding the nature of our planned digitisation activities.
- 7.2 There was a question around the approach taken by departments to digitise or not digitise ahead of transfer. In response, the Board noted that it was very much a mixed economy and the inquiry space was one area where departments were choosing to digitise many records.
- 7.3 The Board:
- (i) Welcomed the current overarching principles;
 - (ii) Reviewed and endorsed the future principles for digitisation and look forward to seeing them reflected in a Digitisation plan in the near future;
 - (iii) Agreed that the newly created Finance and Performance Committee should have governance oversight of our Digitisation activities (noting that Discovery Board will continue to make decisions on online publications); and
 - (iv) Endorsed the approach to create a list of target content alongside the existing commercially focused plan, which will allow The National Archives to reach wider audiences and realise more fully the capacity of digitisation to achieve this.

Action by: GMR

8.0 Quarter 2 Business Priorities

- 8.1 The Board received the Q2 Business Priorities update for monitoring and assurance.

8.2 NC noted using the Performance Committee to build smarter KPIs around delivering our priorities balanced with the funding position and the new Board-level Finance and Performance Committee (see item 5 above) for governance and oversight of them.

8.3 The Board:

- (i) Noted and endorsed the Q2 business priorities update and endorsed the RAG ratings and commentary.

9.0 August Management Accounts

9.1 The Board received the August Financial Report, which presented a slight overspend largely due to unbudgeted staff costs, non-staff costs related to higher energy costs and contracted services.

9.2 The Board:

- (i) Received and endorsed the August Financial Report;
- (ii) Noted the key areas of risks to the budget; and
- (iii) Looked forward to receiving the September accounts out-of-committee.

Action by: NC/AB

10.0 Partnership Project – Scoping Study Final Report

10.1 The Board received an update on the outcome of the scoping study undertaken by Counterculture to explore the extent to which the project partners have genuine strategic alignment and aims. The Board also received the Scoping Study Final Report draft and noted that the final report was being prepared following engagement with all the partners.

10.2 The Board:

- (i) Welcomed the update;
- (ii) Endorsed the decision to progress to the options appraisal stage of the project; and
- (ii) Suggested that the position of the universities, and discussion with all partners on timetabling, should be drawn out for alignment.

11.0 Executive Team Updates

11.1 The Board received a report on Executive Team activities, including the surfacing of live issues, particularly the commission from HM Treasury (HMT) on Headcount. The Board also received assurance around collections security and the management of 'lost' files.

11.2 The Board:

- (i) Noted the updates.
- (ii) Agreed that our response to HMT on Headcount will be shared out-of-committee; and
- (iii) Agreed that NEBMs would be invited to participate in future Staff Award events for

visibility.

Action by: AB

12.0 Non-executive Board Member Verbal Updates

- 12.1 Non-executive Board Members (NEBMs) each provided a verbal update on their recent activity, including insights from other organisations.
- 12.2 RP was pleased to note that Alison White had joined The National Archives as the Independent Member of the Audit and Risk Committee and had attended her first meeting.
- 12.3 RS noted keeping in contact with 'The Hold' – Ipswich home of Suffolk Archives and the Stockton and Darlington Railway commemoration organisers. She also noted a number of Parliamentary delegations and Foreign Office visits where the condition of records was mentioned.
- 12.4 AW noted conversations he was having while a visiting Fellow at All Souls College, University of Oxford. He also noted attending the DCMS Chairs and CEO's event at the British Library.
- 12.5 The Board noted the updates.

13.0 Audit and Risk Committee Chair's Update

- 13.1 RS provided a brief verbal update on the 5 September Audit and Risk Committee meeting and commended NC on the quality of the assurance papers and discussion around Information and Data Risk, Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) and Security.

14.0 Minutes, Matters Arising and Action Log

- 14.1 Subject to minor amendments, the minutes of the meeting held on 18 July 2023 were approved as a correct record.
- 14.2 The Board reviewed and agreed its record of out-of-committee items.
- 14.3 The Board reviewed the Actions Log and agreed to close item 2.

15.0 Any Other Business

Reflections from the meeting

- 15.1 The Board welcomed making space for external speakers on the agenda and found it enhanced the Digitisation Framework discussion.

Items for information

- 15.2 The Board received and noted two items for information: Talk Issue – Annual Awards Special and Counterculture Final Report.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 14.03.