

Minutes of The National Archives' Board	THE
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Held on 29 February 2024 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
 Rommel Pereira (RP) Non-executive Board Member
 Mark Richards (MR) Non-executive Board Member
 Ros Scott (RS) Non-executive Board Member (Items 1-8)
 Emmajane Avery (EJA) Director of Public Engagement and Sector Leadership
 Neil Curtis (NC) Chief Operating Officer
 Lucy Fletcher (LF) Director for Public Records Access and Government Services
 Jeff James (JJ) Chief Executive and Keeper
 Gemma Maclagan Ram (GMR) Research and Commercial Development Director
 Andrea Metcalf (AM) Director of People, Inclusion and Change
 John Sheridan (JS) Digital Director

Also present:

Senior Digital Researcher (Item 8)
 Jenny Bunn (JB) Head of Cataloguing, Taxonomy and Data (Item 8)
 Jack Butterworth (JB) Head of Grants and Funding and Acting Head of Research (Item 4)
 Learning and Engagement Adviser (Item 3)
 Head of Cross Government Engagement (Item 8)
 Catherine Elliott (CE) Head of Digital Services (Item 8)
 Helen Farmer (HF) Interim Head of CEO's Office
 Hannah Lee (HL) Head of HR and Business Partnering (Item 3)
 Lawmaker Service Owner (Item 8)
 Sonia Ranade (SR) Head of Digital Archiving (Item 8)
 Malcolm Todd (MT) Head of Policy (Item 5)
 Marie Twomey-McLeod (MTM) Head of Finance (Item 6)
 Sam Whaley (SW) Head of Strategy
 Governance Coordinator (Minutes)

1.0 Apologies and Declarations of Interest

- 1.1 There were no apologies for absence.
- 1.2 RS declared that she had been appointed to the House of Lords Commission on 31 January 2024. There were no further declarations of interest.

2.0 People, Inclusion and Change Strategy

- 2.1 The Board received a paper providing an update on the People, Inclusion and Change strategy.
- 2.2 AM introduced the paper, summarising how the strategy had evolved since it was previously

discussed with the Board in Summer 2023. AM explained that the strategy aligned with the corporate strategy, *Archives for Everyone*, and the Civil Service People Plan. The strategy encompassed the five workstreams in the People Plan:

- Learning, skills and capacity
- Pay and reward
- Employee experience
- Recruitment, retention and talent
- A high-performing people function.

2.3 AM asked the Board to consider whether the pillars, 'Organisational productivity and sustainability' and 'Culture programme', proposed for the next four years provided the appropriate focus for their activity. AM also asked the Board to consider whether the proposed interventions provided appropriate pace to make progress towards their goals.

2.4 There was a discussion around the fit between the strategy and the Civil Service People Plan, which had been judged to be a good fit with The National Archives' existing proposals for workstreams.

2.5 There was also a discussion around how the strategy could deal with organisational challenges, such as recruitment in digital roles, budgetary constraints, and supporting organisational change.

2.6 The Board encouraged the greater use of metrics from the recently launched Enterprise Resource Planning system going forward, to gauge productivity and encourage the prioritisation and streamlining of activity. Progress would be reported back to the Board via the Finance and Performance Committee.

2.7 Overall, the Board was supportive of the strategy. The Board noted that the strategy was a live document that would evolve as interventions were put into action and as work continued on strategic workforce planning.

2.8 The Board

- (i) Welcomed and noted the paper and endorsed the People Strategy;
- (ii) Encouraged defining five year-outputs to define success; and
- (iii) Looked forward to working with the Director of People, Inclusion and Change to support the delivery of the plan.

3.0 Staff Survey and Wellbeing Update

3.1 The Board received a paper setting out the key results of the 2023 Staff Survey and associated actions, plus an update on the staff Wellbeing offer.

3.2 AM asked the Board to consider the 2023 Staff Survey results and the Wellbeing update and to note the actions arising from the survey. Overall staff engagement had dropped slightly to 67%; two percentage points lower than the previous year.

- 3.3 The Board discussed the results in the context of comparative organisations.
- 3.4 There was also a discussion about understanding risks to retention and how to connect to outputs in order to measure success. It was suggested that the benefits of working at The National Archives could be articulated more strongly. AM advised that exit data and conversations with individuals were also being used to gauge staff engagement and inform ways to address concerns.
- 3.5 The Board:
- (i) Received and reviewed the 2023 Staff Survey and Wellbeing Update; and
 - (ii) Looked forward to receiving the refreshed action plan.

Action by: AM

4.0 Future directions for The National Archives and The National Archives Trust – Options Analysis

- 4.1 The Board received a paper on The National Archives Trust (the Trust).
- 4.2 GMR presented the paper, which gave an update on the relationship with the Trust. The Board were asked to consider options for reviewing the relationship with the Trust going forward.
- 4.3 The Board discussed The National Archives' strategic direction and how best to generate value for money from available resources, taking into consideration factors such as operational models for fundraising and timescales for building relationships with new donors.
- 4.4 The Board:
- (i) Received the paper; and
 - (ii) Agreed to resume the discussion at the Board Development Session on 7 March 2024.

5.0 Parliamentary Archives

- 5.1 The Board received a paper containing an update on the project to relocate the Parliamentary Archives into the custodianship of the Keeper of the Public Records. The Board was asked to consider the update and discuss the project risks.
- 5.2 MT advised that challenges persisted due to the project being very complex in nature, but that progress was broadly on track.
- 5.3 The Board:
- (i) Received the update; and
 - (ii) Thanked the project team, led by MT, for their hard work.

6.0 Budget and Business Priorities 2024-25

- 6.1 The Board received a paper summarising the Budget and Business Priorities for 2024-25. The Board was asked to review and endorse the Budget and Business Priorities.
- 6.2 NC introduced the paper, highlighting that the budget was effectively a pragmatic budget that would maintain the organisation in a consistent position, as many external factors were currently uncertain, such as the outcome of an upcoming general election. Budgeting had been cautious in order to allow for flexibility later in the financial year if possible.
- 6.3 There was a discussion around the risks to the budget regarding the level of resource demanded by Freedom of Information requests, which had increased significantly in recent years. A multi-faceted approach was being taken to managing resource for requests and a business case was being prepared.
- 6.4 NC presented the Business Priorities 2024-25. It was agreed that the Finance and Performance Committee would scrutinise progress against the Business Priorities quarterly and a written update would be circulated to the Board, with any concerns escalated as appropriate.
- 6.5 The Board:-
- (i) Reviewed the budget;
 - (ii) Noted the Business Priorities 2024-25;
 - (iii) Noted that work would continue to agree detailed outcomes and metrics for the Business Priorities 2024-25, to be agreed at the next Finance and Performance Committee; and
 - (iv) Endorsed the budget for 2024-25.

7.0 Finance and Performance Committee Chair's Update

- 7.1 MR provided a verbal update on the inaugural meeting of the Finance and Performance Committee, which was held on 17 January 2024. The main focus had been the budget and business planning for 2024-25, with some valuable in-depth conversations about the direction of travel for the organisation taking place. The Committee had revised its terms of reference to include oversight of major projects. It was felt that the existence of the new group would strengthen overall governance.
- 7.2 The Board:
- (i) Received and noted the verbal update.

8.0 Digital Workshop

- 8.1 The Board participated in a workshop on aspects of The National Archives' digital activity, led by JS. The workshop began with the Board receiving a presentation on current progress and future directions for the digital archiving of government records. There followed a session on Project ETNA, the project to develop The National Archives' website. Finally, there was a session on the issues and opportunities of using Artificial Intelligence in archiving.
- 8.2 The Board:

- (i) Noted the updates; and
- (ii) Agreed to explore the discussions further during a future session.

8.3 At this point, RS left the meeting.

9.0 Board Skills Review

9.1 The Board received a paper on the findings from the Board Skills Review conducted in November 2023. The Board was asked to review the findings and discuss where it had been mentioned that there were skills the Board would seek to fill in the future and how that could be achieved.

9.2 It was noted that it was a transitional year for the Board, with a new CEO joining and two Non-Executive members' terms due to come to an end during Summer 2024.

9.3 There was a discussion about how to engage skills the Board would seek to fill in the future, including utilising external connections. Emphasis was also placed on continuous upskilling of existing members.

9.4 The appropriate time for another review was queried and it was agreed that this would be discussed with the Head of Governance, once the two Non-Executive Board members had been recruited.

9.5 The Board:

- (i) Noted the findings of the skills review; and
- (ii) Agreed that the upcoming recruitment campaign for the two Non-Executive members could seek to address the areas the Board had identified for developing skills, such as Digital.

10.0 Board Terms of Reference

10.1 The Board received a paper presenting proposed revisions for the Terms of Reference for the Board and its sub-committees, following the revision of the framework document between The National Archives and DCMS, as well as the evolution its sub-committees, including the establishment of the Finance and Performance Committee. The Board was asked to review the Terms of Reference and agree the proposed amendments, or review further as necessary.

10.2 It was noted that it was helpful to account in the Terms of Reference for possible future changes to the framework agreement.

10.3 The Board:

- (i) Reviewed the proposed revisions; and
- (ii) Agreed the revised Terms of Reference for the Board and its sub-committees.

11.0 Executive Team Updates

- 11.1 The Board received a report on Executive Team activities, including Freedom of Information requests, funding bids currently in progress, medium term storage and the project to develop a second site. It was advised that an outline business case for this project was being developed for the end of March 2024.
- 11.2 AW, on behalf of the Board, noted the passing of former Historical Manuscript Commissioner, Lord Cormack, who was thanked for his dedication to archives and all his efforts to support The National Archives.
- 11.3 The Board:
- (i) Noted the updates.

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 commended a recent podcast episode that featured JS discussing Data and Digital Archiving. RP also advised that at a recent meeting with the National Audit Office it had been discussed that the scrutiny provided by Board members was of heightened importance at present, given the increasingly active managing of cyber security risks within the UK heritage sector.
- 12.3 MR noted attending an exhibition at a small independent gallery as an example of good public engagement.
- 12.4 The Board noted the updates.

13.0 Minutes, Matters Arising and Action Log

- 13.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2023 were approved as a correct record.
- 13.2 The Board reviewed the Actions Log and agreed to close items 1-5, which were complete.

14.0 Any Other Business

Reflections from the meeting

- 11.1 The Board agreed the workshop stimulated some interesting discussions.

Items for information

- 11.2 There were no items for information.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 14.59