

**Minutes of a meeting of The National Archives' Board**  
**Date of Meeting: 28 November 2024 at 10:00**  
**Location: The National Archives, Kew and Video Conference (VC)**

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NATIONAL	
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  
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  
Gemma MacLagan Ram (GMR) Research and Commercial Development Director  
Andrea Metcalf (AM) Director of People, Inclusion and Change  
Saul Nassé (SN) Chief Executive and Keeper  
John Sheridan (JS) Digital Director

**Also present:**

Nigel Baker (NB) Non-executive Board Member designate (observer)  
Lopa Patel (LP) Non-executive Board Member designate (observer)  
Asha Bagayat (AB) Head of Governance (Minutes)  
Malcolm Todd (MT) Head of Policy (Item 4)  
Marie Twomey-McLeod (MTM) Head of Finance  
Sam Whaley (SW) Head of Strategy (via VC)

**1. Session on Strategy Review**

- 1.1. The Board spent the morning in a strategy session externally facilitated by Nous Group to inform the Review of The National Archives' Strategy.
- 1.2. During the session, members worked in small groups to discuss The National Archives' successes and what we are not good at doing? What we should continue doing, start doing and stop doing and what will The National Archives be in 2040?
- 1.3. The Board fully participated in the discussions and looked forward to receiving an update on the Strategy Review at its 25 February 2025 Board meeting.

**2. Welcome, Apologies for absence and Declarations of Interest**

- 2.1. AW welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially the incumbent Non-executive Board Members (NEBMs) LP and NB.
- 2.2. There were no apologies for absence.

2.3. There were no declarations of interest.

### **3. Chief Executive's Report**

- 3.1. The Board received a report providing an update on the work and priorities of the Chief Executive and the activities of the Executive Team.
- 3.2. SN provided an update on the Comprehensive Spending Review and the outcome of phase one. He noted that the strategy session held in the morning will inform our submission for the second phase, which was expected to include asks for efficiencies. The National Archives' funding relationship with The National Archives Trust will also be considered as part of the Strategy Review.
- 3.3. SN also highlighted his attendance at an evidence session held by the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee in Wales in his capacity as King's Printer of Acts of Parliament and a meeting with the Information Commissioner regarding MoD Service Personnel Records and Section 45 Code of Practice of The Freedom of Information Act.
- 3.4. In response to a question, JS noted that The National Archives' have adopted an Artificial Intelligence (AI) policy which mirrored the Government's AI Policy and that the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), as the regulatory body, was exploring its position on AI, which The National Archives would welcome being a part of.
- 3.5. The Board:
- (i) Welcomed and noted the update.

### **4. Parliamentary Archives Update**

- 4.1. The Board received an update on the Parliamentary Archives Project and noted the risks.
- 4.2. MT presented a risk matrix of various scenarios, including the Keeper's responsibilities towards the preservation of the physical records, crossover duties as Historical Manuscripts Commissioner towards records at risks and as Principal Accounting Officer on managing public money.
- 4.3. The Board reflected upon the challenges, discussed the partnership and terms, praised the work of the team and considered the various options.
- 4.4. The Board:
- (i) Agreed that The National Archives should persevere with the original proposal; and
  - (ii) Supported and endorsed the approach set out by management.

### **5. Commercial Update**

- 5.1. The Board received a report providing an update on progress made towards delivering the five-year Commercial Strategy, which was agreed by the Board in October 2022. The paper covered highlights, and noted those workstreams that didn't go as expected.
- 5.2. Lines of questioning related to opportunities and risks around partnerships, developing knowledge assets and commercialising on our expertise in archival practice.
- 5.3. Noting that the organisation was reviewing its overarching strategy, a review of the Commercial strategy was not proposed until that work had concluded.
- 5.4. The Board:
- (i) Welcomed the update; and
  - (ii) Endorsed the next steps set out in the report.

## **6. Strategic Workforce Planning**

- 6.1. The Board received a paper providing an update on the approach to and progress towards developing a new strategic workforce plan. The workforce plan follows on from the People, Inclusion and Change strategic plan and will be dependent on the outcome of the strategy review.
- 6.2. The paper sought to provide an overview of the foundational interventions already made and the direction of travel (the latter will be subject to modification by the strategy review).
- 6.3. The Board:
- (i) Welcomed sight of the interventions made to date;
  - (ii) Endorsed the direction of travel, noting they will be subject to the outcome of strategy review; and
  - (iii) Agreed that the Finance and Performance Committee should be delegated to undertake a deep dive review on the development of the strategic workforce plan, including looking at talent, and factoring in data and benchmarking; and welcomed SC's involvement in those discussions.

*Action by: AM/AB*

## **7. Corporate Risk Register**

- 7.1. The Board received the Corporate Risk Register, which set out the movements since it was last reviewed by the Audit and Risk Committee on 21 October.
- 7.2. Three new risks had been added to the register relating to risks to government of The National Archives failing to capitalise on digital, Legislation publishing and Access to MoD Service Personnel Records.

7.3. SN provided a verbal update on cyber risk assurance and the mitigations that have been put in place to strengthen our recovery in the event of a cyber attack.

7.4. The Board:

- (i) Reviewed the Corporate Risk Register; and
- (ii) Endorsed management's approach to mitigate risks relating to Cyber Attack.

## **8. 6+6 Financial Forecast**

8.1. The Board received the 6+6 Financial Forecast which presented an underspend largely driven by an increase in additional licensing income and a reduction in staff costs due to delays in recruitment.

8.2. MTM highlighted the challenges to forecasting, which included Gazette income projections and recruitment.

8.3. The Board:

- (i) Endorsed the 6+6 Financial Forecast and the mitigations set out in the paper.

8.4. At this point RS left the meeting.

## **9. Board Effectiveness Review Self-Assessment Survey Results**

9.1. The Board was presented with the results of the 2024 Board effectiveness self-assessment survey results and invited to comment on them and to identify areas to improve the Board's effectiveness.

9.2. AW noted that the last self-assessment survey had been completed three years ago, however there was broad consensus that this remained a high performing Board. With changes introduced to enhance meetings and the quality of discussions, senior leadership turnover and a strategy and spending review underway, there was consensus that time should be given for these to embed, conclude and/or take effect.

9.3. RP reminded management of developing a smart balanced scorecard as a tool for the Executive Team and Finance and Performance Committee to review and monitor corporate performance.

9.4. The Board:

- (i) Received and noted the results of the self-assessment survey;
- (ii) Welcomed having a new NEBM with digital skills and experience; and
- (iii) Agreed to allow a full cycle of Board business to run and having a fallow year with regards to producing and adopting a Board effectiveness action plan.

**10. Updates from the Board Sub-Committees**

- 10.1. RP provided a verbal update on the 21 October meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee and noted the large agenda. He conveyed the Committee’s concerns relating to NC’s departure and year-end burdens upon the new Interim Director of Finance. In relation to the Internal Audit (IA) Programme, the Committee had expressed disappointment at the delays in completing IA reports. He also noted a good practice recommendation for Boards to designate a NEBM as a safeguarding lead.
- 10.2. MR provided a verbal update on the 20 November meeting of the Finance and Performance Committee and noted there had been a deep dive into the Management Accounts and Business Priorities. As the outgoing chair, he noted that the Committee has been a success, with good open discussion with management. He also flagged some concerns with regards to the length of time the organisation takes to make decisions and losing corporate memory with senior leadership turnover.
- 10.3. The Board:
  - (i) Received and noted the verbal update; and
  - (ii) Agreed that AW/SN would consider whether to designate a NEBM as a safeguarding lead.

*Action by: AW/SN*

**11. Non-Executive Board Member Verbal Updates**

- 11.1. Non-executive Board Members (NEBMs) each provided a verbal update on their recent activity, including insights from other organisations.
- 11.2. RP noted attending the DCMS ARC Chair’s meeting hosted at The National Archives.
- 11.3. SC noted joining the ARC’s Thought Leadership session on Corporate Performance Reporting and spending time with AM in relation to the Parliamentary Archives project. She also noted listening to several TNA podcasts.
- 11.4. AW noted attending the AI for GKIM event hosted by The National Archives, meeting with delegates from the Churchill Archives Centre and writing to the Minister of State for Schools regarding the National Curriculum and assessment Review.

**12. Minutes, Matters Arising and Actions**

- 12.1. The minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2024 were approved as a correct record.
- 12.2. The notes from the 4 October Board Awayday were received and noted.
- 12.3. The Board reviewed and agreed the Actions Log.

**13. Any Other Business**

## **Vote of Thanks**

- 13.1. AW led the vote of thanks to RS and MR, whose terms would be coming to an end on 30 December, and today marked their last Board meeting. AW spoke of their huge contribution and noted what a pleasure they had been to work with. He wished them both all the best for the future.
- 13.2. In her response, RS noted that being on The National Archives' Board had been a highlight of her career and that she was very proud to be part of a well-respected institution and noted that it had a friend in her for life.
- 13.3. In his response, MR noted the privilege it has been to serve on the Board and the huge potential of the organisation to become what it wants to be.
- 13.4. AW also noted this was NC's last meeting, who was moving on to a new role, and spoke of his contribution. On behalf of the Board, AW wished NC every successful for the future.
- 13.5. This was followed by a round of applause.

## **Forward Agenda**

- 13.6. The Board received and noted the Forward Agenda.

## **Reflections from the meeting**

- 13.7. The Board agreed that the morning's strategy session was energetic with some good discussions.

## **Items for information**

- 13.8. There were no items for information.

**There being no further business, the meeting closed at 15.32.**