

Public Minutes of The National Archives' Board		THE	
		NATIONAL	
Held on 30 May 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
Rommel Pereira (RP) Non-executive Board Member (via VC)
Mark Richards (MR) Non-executive Board Member
Emmajane Avery (EJA) Director of Public Engagement

Jeff James (JJ) Chief Executive and Keeper
Valerie Johnson (VJ), Director of Research and Collections
Andrea Metcalf (AM) Director of People, Inclusion and Change
John Sheridan (JS) Digital Director

Also present:

Radojka Miljevic (RM), Campbell Tickell (Item 2 via VC)
Service Owner, Digital Archiving (Item 3 via VC)
Programme Delivery Manager (Items 3)
Asha Bagayat (AB) Head of Governance (Minutes)
Beth Brunton (BB) Head of Development (Item 5)
Jenny Bunn (JB) Head of Cataloguing, Taxonomy and Data (Item 3 and 4)
Sonia Ranade (SR) Head of Digital Archiving (Items 3 and 4)
Sam Whaley (SW) Head of CEO's Office and Strategy
Governance Coordinator (Item 7)

1.0 Apologies and Declarations of Interest

- 1.1 AW welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- 1.2 Apologies for absence were received from Sonia Cargan, Non-executive Board Member, Ros Scott, Non-executive Board Member and Gemma Maclagan Ram, Commercial Director.
- 1.3 There were no declarations of interest.

2.0 External Board Effectiveness Review

- 2.1 Following an interim update at the last meeting, the Board received the final report of the external Board effectiveness review, along with a summary report.
- 2.2 In introducing the item, AW thanked RM of Campbell Tickell and her team for producing a high-quality report, focussed on working together to optimise the value from the Board.

2.3 RM joined the meeting and presented the high-level findings of the review, particularly noting that: overall, the governance of the Board was working well and was effective; it was skilled, and there were good processes in place for the escalation of risks. Noting the transition period in the organisation with a new four-year strategy she emphasised the importance of pulling together as a team and operating more strategically, giving more time on the agenda to discuss broad questions relating to direction and creating time and space to debate. She emphasised the importance of having a shared language on the status of the Board, which was well articulated in key governance documents. In relation to the Audit and Risk Committee, positive comments were made in relation to rigour, scrutiny and challenge but that agendas could be rebalanced to create space for discussing knotty issues and strategic risk considerations, including the potential of rebalancing the oversight of major risks with the Board.

2.4 The Board:

- (i) Welcomed and received the external Board effectiveness report;
- (ii) Agreed that the summary report should be kept high-level, if shared with external stakeholders;
- (iii) Noted that there was a lot in the report and a number of recommendations, which required further consideration; and
- (iv) Agreed to hold a workshop session in July to discuss the themes and recommendations in greater detail, which will inform a Board Effectiveness Action Plan for agreement.

Action by: AW/JJ/AB

3.0 Update on Digital Archiving Programme

3.1 The Board received a report providing an update on progress on the Digital Archiving Infrastructure Programme, a 4-year plan running from 2021-25 that seeks to secure and expand The National Archives' Digital Archiving Infrastructure. The paper, in particular, covered the strategic case, including the overall aims and direction, delivery to date, objectives for this year (2023-24), and the main risks and mitigations. The Board also received a pre-recorded demonstration of the Transfer Digital Records (TDR) service, one of the major deliverables from the programme.

3.2 The Board welcomed the pre-recorded demonstration and noted that TDR was a step change in accessing records and welcomed having a line of sight on it.

3.3 Lines of questioning related to engagement and the appetite of transfer bodies to use the TDR service and, more widely, to funding constraints and the prioritisation of the programme in the next four-year plan. In response, it was noted that TDR has been built as a solution to user needs and that the roll out was being ramped up following the Keeper's Report on the 20-year Rule. The government Inquiry function was an opportunity to build engagement and reduce the barriers to transferring records to The National Archives. In respect of prioritisation, noting the misalignment between the new four-year plan and our two-year Spending Settlement, this was dependent on capital funding from HM Treasury. However, since the programme was multi-year, the timescales could be stretched if resources were tight.

3.4 The Board:

- (i) Received and welcomed the programme update and the surfacing of risks; and
- (ii) Gave its support for the programme and the Transfer Digital Records service.

4.0 Archives and Artificial Intelligence (AI)

- 4.1 The Board received a discussion paper setting out the AI Revolution and what it might mean for The National Archives, to inform a high-level strategic conversation on The National Archives' positioning on this matter. To prepare for the discussion, Board members were invited to work through an exercise using AI tools, Google Bard and ChatGPT.
- 4.2 Board members' feedback from the exercise generally focussed on issues of ethics, integrity, reliability and accuracy of the information produced by the AI tools and public trust, intellectual property and plagiarism. AM also pointed out the importance of understanding how the tools were being used by candidates in recruitment and how we might consider assessing those applications.
- 4.3 Questions related to actions being taken to exert influence in the AI space. It was agreed that our focus should be around our public task, which included providing access to content creators/transfer bodies, and that we should work with partners in this area to influence and lead on AI developments.
- 4.4 There was general agreement that we needed to develop some initial ideas for our strategic response to the AI Revolution and the Board asked for a proposition paper on The National Archives' positioning, covering risks and security issues, to inform a further detailed discussion.
- 4.5 The Board:
- (i) Welcomed the discussion paper and activity;
 - (ii) Agreed that The National Archives' focus should be its core purpose and public task;
 - (iii) Asked for a more developed proposition paper on AI for The National Archives to inform a strategic discussion at a future meeting; and
 - (iv) Agreed that The National Archives should be at the table of Government Knowledge & (GKIM) discussions.

Action by: JS

5.0 Update on The National Archives Trust

- 5.1 The Board received a paper providing an update on The National Archives Trust and its current funding priorities and options.
- 5.2 The Board agreed that The National Archives should engage with the Trust on our funding relationship with them and also how their funding priorities match with our four-year plan.
- 5.3 The Board:
- (i) Received and noted the update;
 - (ii) Noted potential future developments in the Clore Learning Centre project; and

- (iii) Agreed to engage with the Trust on our funding relationship with them and also how their funding priorities match with our four-year plan.

Action by: EJA/BB

6.0 Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) Update

- 6.1 The Board received a verbal update from RP on the ARC meeting held on 17 May, noting that the Committee had received a briefing and assurance around The National Archives' cyber risk exposure and control mechanisms, the final assessment from our exiting Internal Auditors, BDO, on our governance, risk and internal control mechanisms, and also a progress update from the National Audit Office on the final auditing of the Accounts. The Board also received the Annual Report of the Chair of the ARC, providing an overview of the Committee's performance and areas of review during 2022-23, to support the finalisation of the accounts and governance statement.
- 6.2 The Board:
 - (i) Received and noted the verbal update from the 17 May meeting; and
 - (ii) Reviewed and endorsed the Annual Report of the Chair of the ARC and received assurance from the work of the Committee during 2022-23.

7.0 Annual Report and Accounts 2022-23

- 7.1 The Board was invited to review and comment on the latest draft of the Annual Report and Accounts 2022-23 and noted the outstanding work and queries to the accounts. The Board also received an update on the production timetable.
- 7.2 The Board:
 - (i) Noted that comments made in Convene will be incorporated into the next draft of the Annual Report and Accounts 2022-23;
 - (ii) Noted that the final typeset designed version will be circulated to the ARC and then onwards to Board for write round approval, once the Audit Completion Report has been received;
 - (iii) Received assurance that production was on-track; and
 - (iv) Subject to (i) agreed to submit the latest version to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) for sign off of the narrative and noting of the accounts.

Action by: NC/AB

8.0 Executive Team Updates

- 8.1 The Board received a report on Executive Team activities.
- 8.2 VJ was pleased to note that our minister had signed off our refreshed Archives Sector offer, and we are working on plans for a public launch.
- 8.3 The Board was also pleased to note that ministers had also signed off our four-year business plan, highlighting specific initiatives, and congratulated SW for his work.

8.4 The Board noted the updates.

9.0 Non-executive Board Member Verbal Updates

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

9.2 MR shared insights on the culture and heritage sector funding landscape and also initiatives to increase the participation of people from marginalised communities.

9.3 RP noted attending the DCMS ARC Chair's Forum and along with AW, an induction meeting with our new Internal Auditors, Mazars.

9.4 AW noted attending the DCMS Eurovision Summer Party at Number 10 and the Coronation of HM King Charles III. He also noted a number of meetings with senior officials in universities and local authorities relevant to relationship building and possible future partnerships with The National Archives.

9.5 The Board noted the updates.

10.0 Minutes, Matters Arising and Action Log

10.1 Subject to minor amendments, the minutes of the meeting held on 26 April 2023 were approved as a correct record.

10.2 The Board reviewed Actions Log.

11.0 Any Other Business

Forward Work Programme

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

Items for information

11.2 The Board received and noted two items for information: April Talk Issue and the Risk Management Policy.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 12.54