

**MINUTES OF BRANCH HEADS' MEETING
TUESDAY 23 AUGUST 2007 at 10.00am
LORD CLERK REGISTERS ROOM, GRH**

Present: George MacKenzie, Peter Anderson Dave Brownlee, David Brown, Jim Grady, Bruno Longmore, Rob Mildren, Laura Mitchell, Joanna O'Rourke, Jenny Cutts (secretary)

Apologies: Ian Hill, Alison Horsburgh, Bob Phillips, Linda Ramsay.

1. Minutes of the Meeting of 19 July 2007

1.1 The previous minutes were approved.

2. Matters arising

[6.2] Branding

It was reported that the NAS branding specification had been drafted and that senior management will reconsider this report with a view to tendering for consultants. It was noted that the Keeper intends for this work to be undertaken during the current financial year.

3. Staffing issues

3.1 It was noted that one conservator had been recruited at the recent recruitment board and that one vacancy remained unfilled.

3.2 It was reported that ICT branch were holding a joint recruitment board with SG Rural Environment Research and Analysis Directorate (RERAD) and that 13 candidates were to be interviewed for a total of 7 vacancies. It was reported that SG HR were interested in these arrangements as a recruitment model to be used by other areas of Scottish Government. It was reported that HR were interested in developing professional specialist recruitment microsites, for ICT professionals for example and that a more ongoing process of recruitment rather than major one-off assessment centres would be useful.

3.3. It was reported that the Scottish Government were developing a People Strategy and considered that the specialist recruitment needs of Agencies might be provided for in relation to this Strategy. It was agreed that bi-annual HR administered Assessment Centres are adequate in the recruitment of general civil servants but that other arrangements are required for Agency staff with specialisms, such as archivists and conservators.

3.4 It was reported that due to changes in working patterns and anticipated sick leave following medical treatment, there was need for HSR to call upon a pool of staff outwith the branch for cover. This was agreed by senior management and it was noted that some training may be required for newer members of staff. It was agreed that branch heads discuss the proposed cover arrangements with the relevant staff in their branches.

4. Branch Reports

4.1 Finance and Administration Branch

Jim Grady reported on progress with the VR project tendering process whereby a shortlist of seven companies is under consideration. The tendering process for the Image Library project is ongoing in conjunction with project partners. It was further reported that three groups of consultants had been appointed to work on future accommodation options. A reminder was issued that flexi updates should be submitted quickly in order to avoid problems. It was noted

that flexibility to carry over educational project funds into 2008-2009 was not clear. It was further noted that the spending review would be administered at the level of the Minister's portfolio and that the Minister is expected to be closely engaged with the allocation of budgets. It was further clarified that the choice of digitisation supplier would include capability to deliver the most within a short timescale. It was noted that NAS is now financially administered as part of the SG Culture portfolio and that transfer of funds between NAS and GROS may consequently be more difficult.

4.2 Outreach Services Branch

David Brown reported that progress was being made on the 'Union for a' that' and image library projects and that the 4th edition of *Tracing Your Scottish Ancestors* was on target for publication.

4.3 Court and Legal Records Branch

Laura Mitchell reported on CLRB staffing levels. It was noted that a B1 casual is currently filling in for a B2 and that this post will terminate in January 2008. The post transferred to OSB for maternity cover will return to CLRB in March 2008 and consequently the branch will carry a vacancy for two months. It was agreed that Peter Anderson consider redeployment of curatorial staff in the context of anticipated staff moves. It was noted that advance warning for individuals involved would be important regarding disengagement from current posts. George Mackenzie suggested a transfer list identifying possible staff changes would be useful. It was noted that a post regarding the Dalhousie education projects, situated within either PRB or OSB may also be considered within this context. It was further noted that the in-year review period provides opportunities for consultation about potential or desired staff moves. The agreement that the current NAS records manager undertake that role for a period of 18 months should be included within these considerations.

4.4. Government Records Branch

Bruno Longmore reported on the release of the Jock Stein file and attendant work by GRB and other branches to facilitate this. It was explained that failure of the press release to appear on the Scottish Government website resulted in the NAS site receiving fewer hits than expected. It was noted that SRAC approval for release of the file was forthcoming. It was further explained that discussion with SG FOI unit to harmonise approaches to FOI requests for closed government files were scheduled and that a submission to SG regarding FOI problems was being finalised in order to clarify NAS position. The selection and appraisal of EDRM records was being finalised and it was noted that the establishment of entirely new records series for cataloguing GRB records would be necessitated. It was further reported that the accession of EDRM records from SG is now likely to occur after 2009 because SG require time to assess FOI issues in relation to these records. Bruno Longmore further reported that launch of the Digital Data Archive was delayed and expected to go live in November/December 2007. It was noted that Dr Hugh Hagan was currently in Siberia as part of return visit in connection with the group of Russian archivists organised by John Biggart that visited NAS in November 2006.

4.5 Information and Communications Technology Branch

Rob Mildren reported that the ScotlandsPeople infrastructure is in place and that labelling and imaging all desktop PCs for the Centre was underway. No further progress with the Joint Telephony Service has been made although indications from GROS suggest that procurement will be feasible during September 2007. THUS Ltd will proceed to upgrade the interbuilding links within the next two months and certain measures have also been taken to improve

network performance at WRH. It was reported that the redesigned Scottish Handwriting website will be relaunched in September 2007 and that progress is being made regarding the ScottishDocuments2 website for hosting digital images of CH records in advance of their addition to ScotlandsPeople. Requirements for increased storage capacity were discussed and it was noted that these challenges were not insurmountable but would cost money.

4.6 Reader Services Branch

Joanna O'Rourke reported that the five additional pPCs supplied for Historical Search Room customer use had proved useful and had been busy ever since installation. It was noted that several readers had expressed thanks for the additional facilities. It was explained that further demands for customer terminals would be monitored and time limits introduced if necessary. Rob Mildren added that ICTB have an objective to investigate the installation of workstations for each search room desk and to consider the ergonomic requirements involved, including sight lines and cables. It was noted that this work was scheduled to be undertaken in November 2007. It was further reported that there are insufficient power points for use by researchers' laptops in the search room and that increasing numbers of complaints/requests regarding these were experienced. Conversely, many HSR users would prefer the search room to be emptied of computer terminals because of the increased noise levels which have resulted from this change. It was noted that a large amount of staff time is taken up with explaining how customers may use the RAC search tool for research using sasines. It was also suggested that WSR may have been busier as a result of customers visiting WRH to consult digital surrogates rather than HSR.

4.7 Conservation Services Branch

A written report had been submitted noting that a request for the NAS van to access George Street was being investigated, technical solutions to problems with the transmission system had been identified and freezers for the storage of photographic material had been ordered. It was agreed that Dave Brownlee would follow up the request for a washing machine to be provided for CSB. The documents on exhibition as part of the 'Making of the Act of Union' had been transferred from the House of Lords to Holyrood in advance of the opening of the exhibition there on 20 September 2007. It was further reported that orders for the boxmaking service will be available for NAS staff via *theOracle* and that one local authority has placed an order for boxes.

4.8 Senior Management Branch

4.8.1 Non Executive Directors

It was reported that the non executive director appointment process had been well received and a total of 24 applications made. It was explained that the sift had been undertaken and 7 candidates would be interviewed on 6 September by George Mackenzie, Dave Brownlee and Leslie Evans, Director Europe, External Affairs and Culture. It was noted that some very talented applicants had been declined an interview, such was the quality of candidates. It was further noted that improved reporting on the quarterly progress against the Corporate Plan would be necessary with regard to the Management Board being augmented by the appointed non executive directors.

Action: Senior Management Branch to circulate quarterly report templates to branches.

4.8.2 Register of Tartans

The Keeper explained that the Tartan Register Bill is expected to be laid in October 2007 and that the earliest date at which the Keeper of the Tartan Register (KTR) may be expected to

take up office would be March/April 2008. It was further explained that the KTR would be administratively located within the Lyon Office but that the KTR could not be the Lord Lyon. NAS commitments to this initiative were outlined. It was reported that NAS has agreed to archive the documentation supporting the Register of Tartan and to provide ICT infrastructure enabling the existing two registers to be unified as a starting point for the official register. It was noted that discussions with the Scottish Government, Scottish Enterprise and industry representatives were underway and that financial aspects are being considered.

4.8.3 Accommodation

It was reported that consultants had been appointed regarding costing future accommodation options and the preparation of a revised Business Case, as the original had been produced five years ago. It was noted that the possible use of Granton and other brownfield sites would be included as well as remote storage options. Ramifications of NAS place within Culture portfolio were discussed. It was noted that a £30 million spending pressure would be relatively large within this portfolio and that the Minister will be scrutinising the final submission. It was clarified that the Scottish Family History Centre is anticipated to open in March 2008 and that the Reid Room has been finished. The Garden Entrance to GRH is expected to be open for use by the public from the beginning of September. It was explained that staff may be able to traverse the SFHS area of GRH as necessary but that there was a desire to minimise the presence of record transporting trolleys within these public areas. In connection with this aim, it was reported that there had been 1000 less sasine copies made within the past month as a result of digital access to sasines. George Mackenzie reported that discussions with the Royal Botanic Gardens of Edinburgh concerning potential designs for the GRH garden had taken place and that three suggestions had been the Garden of Life, a Heraldic Garden and a garden encapsulating concepts in celebration of the National Collections.

5. Digital Policy

It was noted that Alison Horsburgh had circulated a paper regarding working groups on this topic, that nominations for sub-group membership had been made and that certain working group meetings had already been held.

6. Any other business

It was reported that the name of the Scottish Executive would be changed to the Scottish Government, that a SG People Strategy was in development and that the spending review is expected to require a 2% efficiency saving across the Culture portfolio. The Scottish Government expect a 1.4% increase to be announced by the UK Treasury in October 2007. It was further reported that continuance of the NAS Special Bonus Scheme would be put to the staff vote. George Mackenzie invited feedback concerning the operation and effectiveness of this scheme from branch heads. A branding issue was raised with regard to the appearance of staff tea rooms and consideration of how the organisation appears to volunteers and visitors using these areas.

7. Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be held in September 2007.

Jenny Cutts
20 September 2007