

MINUTES OF BRANCH HEADS' MEETING
TUESDAY 19 JUNE 2007 at 10.00am
LORD CLERK REGISTERS ROOM, TTH

Present: George MacKenzie, Dave Brownlee, David Brown, Jim Grady, Alison Horsburgh, Bruno Longmore, Rob Mildren Laura Mitchell, Linda Ramsay, Tristram Clarke, Jenny Cutts (secretary)

Apologies: Peter Anderson, Bob Phillips

1. Minutes of the Meeting of 17 May 2007

1.1 The previous minutes were approved.

2. Matters arising

2.1.1 Cost of Storage

Jim Grady reported on his investigations into the cost of storing records at NAS pertaining to action point [6.2] of the previous meetings' minutes. It was noted that as there are so many variables which could be taken into account when making the calculation, it would be possible to come up with a number of different figures, depending on what they were being used for. He reported, however, that a figure of £100-£110 per linear metre per year would cover standard operating costs divided by our total storage capacity. It was noted that other institutions had been asked about their storage costs, but that no definitive method of calculating this had emerged.

2.1.2 It was stated that the cost of storing records at NAS could not be directly compared to the costs of records storage by commercial organisations, because of the many and varied services and overheads which are factors in running the National Archives of Scotland. It was reported that it would be difficult to calculate the cost of storage alone and it was agreed that using the simple calculation (dividing operational costs by total records capacity) was more appropriate. It was also considered that quality of storage and proximity to search rooms were other factors which would complicate direct comparisons of records storage with private companies.

2.1.3 Laura Mitchell reported that the Scottish Court Service had asked for the cost of storing their records at NAS per metre per year and David Brown explained that he required the same figure for discussion with a private records depositor. A general discussion concerning potential problems of remote and commercial records storage was also held.

3. Staffing issues

3.1 Linda Ramsay explained how ongoing problems with HR are impeding the recruitment of conservators. Dave Brownlee reported that agreement had been reached with HR to waive the educational qualifications criteria for A2 archive attendant staff. These posts would soon be readvertised accordingly. Laura Mitchell stated that problems with HR had affected the recruitment of CLRB summer weeders with regard to start dates. It was noted that Mary Robson, former NAS HR business partner, had been replaced by Louise Wilson. John Simmons has moved from CLRB to the post of Image Library Manager, OSB, to cover for Gill Mapstone's maternity leave. Rob Mildren reported that Steve Bordwell will leave NAS to work with GROS and that a replacement for this and another vacancy may be obtained from a forthcoming Scottish Executive recruitment board. The permanent WRH receptionist

started on 18 June 2007 and the replacement Records Management Assistant is in post. It was noted that the field of candidates for the two archives trainee posts in PRB/RSB had not been as strong as in previous years and that both HSR and PRB rely on two trainees being appointed each year.

3.2 Dave Brownlee reported that the NEDS advertisements had been placed in the Scotsman and the Herald on Friday 15th June.

4. Branch Reports

4.1 Information and Communications Technology Branch

Rob Mildren reported that work on SFHS infrastructure is progressing well. He explained investigations into NASnet reliability were ongoing and reported that options for energy efficiency mechanisms were also being tested.

4.2 Finance and Administration Branch

Jim Grady explained that the monthly expenditure report had not yet been issued as 2006/07 accounts are still being finalised in respect of accruals.

4.3 Private Records Branch

David Brown reported that the transfer of payment for the Dalhousie Collection is expected to be completed this week.

4.4 Reader Services Branch

Alison Horsburgh explained that in consequence of moving the legal search room, more PCs are required for HSR customers and an RFC is in place to this effect. It was noted that legal customers now seem satisfied with the arrangements, whereas some complaints from historical customers have been received due to the increased demand for online access.

4.5 Court and Legal Records Branch

Laura Mitchell reported that CLRB have been liaising with depositors with particular regard to retention schedules and access status. A meeting, at which the Keeper was also present, was held with the Lord President on 5 April 2007. Plans to establish an expert records group across the Scottish courts are underway and building refurbishment has prompted an interest in and reassessment of stored court records, many of which are likely to be deposited with NAS. Born digital court and legal records were also discussed with regard to progress of the DDA and requirements for accessing them.

4.6 Outreach Services Branch

Tristram Clarke reported that several education workshops had been held and work towards a DVD resource progresses. It was noted that the joint exhibition concerning the Union of Parliaments had been launched at the House of Lords and a business case concerning related interactive resources will be prepared. A new edition of 'Tracing Your Scottish Ancestors' is being proofed and a completely revised edition will be produced, taking into account the impact of the Scottish Family History Centre.

4.7 Government Records Branch

4.7.1 Bruno Longmore reported that problems with Freedom of Information referrals have been experienced. It was noted that one appeal concerning a government file in NAS custody had resulted in the Scottish Information Commissioner making a decision against the Keeper of the Records of Scotland instead of against the Scottish Executive. The protocol unit,

freedom of information unit and press office are considering this appeal and will prepare a submission to Ministers regarding release of this file. It was further explained that many referrals to the Scottish Executive, whereby government files have been retransmitted for FOI review, are not being dealt with within the specified time periods and that some SE staff have demonstrated reluctance to deal with these. It was noted that NAS cannot compel reviewers to meet their legislative responsibilities in this respect and that much GRB time is spent chasing up FOI reviews. It was recognised that the Scottish Executive receives a large number of FOI requests concerning its own files and those referred by NAS are not being treated as a priority. George Mackenzie agreed that this issue should be raised with senior Scottish Executive colleagues.

Action: George Mackenzie to discuss with Bruno Longmore.

4.7.2 Bruno further reported that the DDA project is back on track following a hiatus and that certain elements should be completed before Steve Bordwell departs the NAS.

4.8 Conservation Services Branch

Linda Ramsay reported that CSB are operating with two B2 vacancies at present and that the electronic catalogue has led to an increase in requests for exhibition loans. It was recognised that exhibition loans require a lot of work from the owning cataloguing branch, CSB and OSB. It was clarified that, although exhibition loan agreements state that NAS may recover costs incurred, there are significant additional resource implications and in practice only travel costs are generally reclaimed. Review of this situation may be useful. Linda explained that upgrading of the Disaster and Contingency Plan was ongoing and reminded colleagues she would be contacting them to discuss business contingency planning.

5. Digital Policy

5.1 It was noted that George Mackenzie had considered the previous meeting's discussion of digital policy issues and identified the following next priorities: services to customers of digital copies; charges; linkages between the catalogue, ordering system and other systems; priorities for digitisation. It was agreed that Alison Horsburgh convene a working group to consider these topics and report back to the branch heads meeting in October. It was clarified that copyright was an implicit part of the first priority. It was noted that Peter Anderson led a group to consider similar issues a few years ago and that that background work produced by that group may be useful.

Action: Alison Horsburgh to convene a working group to consider and report on digital policy.

5.2 It was agreed that the outstanding issues of born digital records and electronic records management should be taken forward initially by Bruno Longmore and Laura Mitchell and that they should report to the branch heads meeting in October with specific topics for further discussion.

Action: Bruno Longmore and Laura Mitchell to discuss and report on born digital records and electronic records management issues.

6. Any other business

6.1 Record location system

Linda Ramsay stressed the importance of accuracy and timeliness in managing the records location system and explained that reminders would be issued to all staff concerning the proper way to submit the relevant forms. It was noted that the storage figures indicated by this system will be crucial to the business case for long term accommodation.

6.2 Branding

It was clarified that the branding specification will be prepared by the end of June 2007. Tristram Clarke asked whether the branding timetable would fit in with the publication of NAS leaflets and reports, as a new logo may be chosen. It was also noted that re-branding would need to be incorporated in headed paper, the NAS van logo, and badges for search room staff. Alison Horsburgh reported that magnetic metallic badges were being considered for use by search room staff in order that NAS public service matches that of the Scottish Family History Service in terms of professional appearance.

6.3 Signage

George Mackenzie reported that discussions concerning signage for the Scottish Family History Centre and NAS had been held. It had been agreed that the normal way into the building for all historical customers should be the garden entrance, as originally planned when the refurbishment programme at GRH got underway. It was noted that the double doors to the Historical Search Room at the top of the stairs from the Adam Dome would no longer be used.

6.4 Annual Report

Tristram Clarke requested that branch heads submit their contributions to the NAS annual report in time for publication preparation. It was agreed that a deadline will be issued for these. George Mackenzie urged that contributions are kept concise and noted that a new format for publication was being considered.

Action: Tristram Clarke to issue deadline for Annual Report contributions to branch heads.
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6.5 Lord Clerk Register

It was reported that the new Lord Clerk Register, Lord Mackay of Clashfern, Kt, had been invited to visit NAS but a meeting had not yet been arranged.

6.6 New Administration

George Mackenzie reported that a briefing had been sent to Linda Fabiani, Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture, and that she will be invited to visit NAS. It was noted that this might be possible during parliamentary recess (30 June - 2 September) during July. George Mackenzie met Leslie Evans, Director of Europe, External Affairs and Culture on 18th June 2007. Andrew Goudie, Director-General Economy and Chief Economic Adviser, will also be invited to visit. A series of briefings from D-G Economy have been received by senior management.

6.7 Gender Equality Duty

It was noted that a consultation questionnaire concerning Gender Equality Duty had been issued to all staff. It was clarified that the NAS Gender Equality Scheme should be in place by 29 June 2007 and that this relates not only to NAS as an employer but also to customers and other stakeholders and may influence what information is collected about readers in future. It was agreed that branch heads encourage their staff to contribute their views on gender equality as appropriate.

6.8 Accommodation

Dave Brownlee reported that the building work on GRH is approximately 10 weeks behind schedule and that the garden entrance is anticipated to in use by July/August 2007. The James Craig Walk entrance will be in operation for visitors until then. Suggestions were made about screening of the electricity sub-station situated in the garden to the rear of GRH and it was confirmed that Stephen Blackmore, Regius Keeper Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE), had been consulted regarding the RBGE designing the garden.

6.9 TTH reception area

It was noted that the reception area of TTH has been used for the display of goods for purchase and that these and certain notices would be better placed in staff rooms instead. It was agreed that Dave Brownlee would issue a staff notice to this effect in order that the reception areas continue to appear professional and uncluttered. It was noted that an element of successful branding would be the tight control of notices and signs.

7. Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be held in August 2007.

Jenny Cutts
20 June 2007