

**MINUTES OF BRANCH HEADS' MEETING
THURSDAY 15 MARCH 2007 at 10.00am
MEETING ROOM, TTH**

Present: George MacKenzie, Dave Brownlee, David Brown, Jim Grady, Ian Hill, Alison Horsburgh, Bruno Longmore, Rob Mildren, Laura Mitchell, Bob Phillips, Jenny Cutts (Secretary)

Apologies: Peter Anderson, Linda Ramsay

1. Minutes of the Meeting of 14 December 2006 and Matters Arising

1.1 The previous minutes were approved.

1.2 Clarification of item 2.6 regarding quarterly reports on sickness absence from HR was sought. It was confirmed that these reports would be provided to NAS quarterly Management Board meetings and distributed to Branch Heads thereafter. Senior Management will ensure that HR check with an employee's line manager before sending out trigger breach letters and may be requested not to send letters. Jim Grady agreed to report back regarding distribution of NAS internal monitoring reports, generated from the SL9 system, to branch heads. It was also noted that SL9 generated monitoring information does not include sickness absences where the individual has not yet returned to work.

Action Point Jim Grady to report on internal monitoring reports.

1.3 Bruno Longmore noted that item 1.2, the suggestion to dispense with paper records management acknowledgement forms, is still being considered as it will require resources from ICTB. It was noted that it would not be possible for RMU staff to issue acknowledgement emails manually due to the large number of files issued to staff. It was agreed that establishing an electronic system at some point during 2007-8 is desirable but not urgent.

2. Staffing Issues

2.1 Four of the five recently recruited B2 archivists have taken up post and the fifth will start on 23 April 2007. It was reported that B2 has been established as the standard grade for qualified archivists working in NAS and the remaining qualified archivist has been promoted to B2 in line with this policy. Three members of staff are pursuing archival qualification through distance learning. Currently, two of whom are funded by NAS and the third, self-funded. It was agreed that Bruno Longmore investigate progress with the staff undertaking these courses to establish when NAS funding may become available to another member of staff.

Action Point Bruno Longmore will report on staff progress with distance learning courses.
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2.2 It was reported that ICTB have one B1 Infrastructure and Applications post, one A3 Helpdesk post and three Digital Imaging Unit posts to fill and that recruitment is underway. There are six permanent archive attendant posts currently unfilled or filled by Pertemps staff. An external recruitment exercise is currently in progress. The WRH receptionist job advert has been published on the Scottish Executive vacancy board. It was noted that backfilling the

A3 RMU assistant post in GRB, for which expressions of interest have been invited, will create a vacancy elsewhere in the office. Decisions regarding the timing and possible cover arrangements for transferring an archivist from CLRB to OSB to cover for maternity leave will be made following the budget meeting scheduled to be held on the 19 March 2007.

3. Reports

3.1 Conservation

Linda Ramsay's written report noted that CSB and OSB plan another visit to Dumfries and Galloway to monitor proper arrangements for local archives there, that the box-making service has been established and a demonstration to branch heads will be available and that the handling seminar held on 14 March 2007 had provided guidance for those staff who had not attended the previous sessions.

3.2 Accommodation

3.2.1 Bob Phillips reported on progress with the Scottish Family History Centre (SFHC). It was reported that the contractors Rok Building Limited have been working on the heating ducts in the Matheson Dome, the Dundas Room will be completed following power installation schedule for 20 March 2007 and the Legal Search Room has been scheduled to move to the Robertson Wing on 1 May 2007. A flexi terminal, swipe card entry system and receptionist will be in place at the Sasine Office entrance when it comes into use. Discussion was held about naming this door the "Garden Entrance" including a suggestion that we contact the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh regarding the horticultural development of this area.

3.2.2 It was reported that TTH 2A re-shelving work was complete and that other archival institutions had taken up the offer to re-use the replaced shelving.

3.2.3 George Mackenzie reported on the Minister's initial response to the TTH2 submission which requested further details about why the proposed Granton development for other National Collections would not be suitable for NAS. It was explained that the other National Collections participation in the Granton project may compel NAS to do the same. It was reported that a costed option on the use of the Granton development would be included as one of the options in the Business Case which NAS will provide to the Minister in November 2007. It was further explained that the other National Collections had been consulted on sharing TTH2 but were not keen to do so for reasons of accessibility. The point was made that the planned Edinburgh tram system will serve both Sighthill Industrial Estate and Granton.

3.2.4 Bob Phillips reported that there are plans to upgrade the disabled toilet/shower room and tea room at WRH. The NAS Health and Safety Committee had met in January with Dave Brownlee as chair and meetings will get back onto a quarterly cycle. Also, that a joint NAS/GROS Environmental and Sustainability Committee, chaired by Sue Barber, had been established. It was noted that the former smoking tea room in GRH is being considered for a video-conferencing/meeting room facility and is presently used for IT equipment storage relating to development of the SFHC. Dee Williams has formed a working group to consider future use of the NRH Dome and breakout rooms which OSB has been invited to join. This group will consider the provision of educational facilities there.

3.3 FOI

3.3.1 Bruno Longmore reported that during the Senior Management Assistant vacancy the foi@nas.gov.uk inbox had not been checked resulting in several overdue FOI requests not being acknowledged or answered. These have now been passed to GRB staff who have contacted the enquirers to apologise and initiated progress on their requests. A tendency has been observed whereby individual researchers submit multiple FOI requests concerning different files rather than a single request covering several files. Bruno recently attended the FOI Implementation Group in Glasgow and reported that it has now been transformed into an FOI User Group as the implementation stage has passed. He also reported that the Freedom of Information Commissioner has issued his third annual report. .

3.4 ICT

3.4.1 Rob Mildren reported that Calm version 7 is undergoing user testing and the office-wide upgrade is scheduled for 26/27 March 2007. Rob explained that a plan to deploy the digital imaging backshift on Fridays to work in GRH Digital Imaging Unit (DIU) had been formulated to deal with DIU copying backlog and that clearance by Monday mornings would have a positive effect on DIU morale and enable work to progress on a programme of digitising negative photostats. It was noted that resources for archive attendants putting away the documents following copying should also be considered in this plan.

3.4.2 It was reported that the Electronic Ordering System (EOS) and training have been rolled out to the legal search firms and that performance and use will be monitored. Conversion by BT of microfiche (which represents 20-25% of legal search room copying) will commence in April 2007. Flat screen monitors upgrade will be rolled out across the office and the oldest desktop PC's upgraded.

3.4.3 It was noted that a 40% reduction in related helpdesk calls following cabling replacement at WRH indicates improvement in network performance, but that a small number of identified users in WRH are still experiencing problems. It is planned that upgrading the inter-building link as capacity increases will also improve performance.

3.4.4 A meeting to discuss future Telephony was held with GROS on 20 February 2007 and it was noted that the consultant's final report had taken NAS requirements into account. GROS will replace Siemens as NAS' telephony service provider.

3.4.5 Online Resources Team are investigating the digitisation of the Valuation Rolls with particular regard to the complex nature of indexing the documents and finding space within NAS buildings for work to progress.

3.4.6 Development of the NAS OPAC prototype has been started and a user requirements document will be drawn up as a basis for work to be undertaken by Helen Bull. It was noted that the NAS OPAC will be an SQL database harvesting data from Calm and that Calm will remain the tool used for NAS cataloguing, accessioning and recording conservation work.

3.4.7 It was suggested that a digital camera might be installed in WRH for WSR copying as photocopying continues to be the method employed. It was noted that this would be particularly useful regarding copying of large-scale documents such as maps and plans. It was reported that stationing a single copying facility and operator at WRH had not proved

successful in the past and that RSB are, at the Keeper's request, investigating the possibility of search room visitors using their own digital cameras for copying.

4. Reports at Branch Heads' Meetings

George Mackenzie explained that a meetings structure had been devised to coordinate the various NAS group meetings and that Branch Head Meetings were scheduled to take place eight times a year within this. A discussion was held concerning the content and structure of future branch heads meetings and whether reports from other branches should be added to the regular agenda items. It was agreed that putting thematic issues on the agenda would be more useful than regular reports from each of the Branch Heads. Thematic agenda items suggested for the future are: Top 3 suggestions for improving NAS (digital policy, branding, late opening/stocktaking) timed to coincide with strategies to deal with them; SFHC; TTH2; Digital Data Archive project. It was agreed that digital policy should be discussed at the next Branch Heads' meeting in May and that TTH2 should be discussed at the meeting in September in advance of the Ministerial submission in October/November. Branch Heads were invited to propose agenda items in advance of future meetings.

5 Non-executive Directors

George Mackenzie explained that the process of appointing non-executive directors (NEDS) to NAS Management Board would begin soon.

6. Any Other Business

6.1 It was noted that the Keeper's Open Forums would continue to be held in rotation with 2 held in each of the three buildings each year.

6.2 It was agreed that Branch Heads would contribute to the Keeper's Diary on a rotational basis. Consideration was being given to whether the Keeper's Diary might be published on the NAS website as well as on the Oracle.

6.3 It was reported that all the bilaterals between senior management and Branch Heads to discuss the Corporate Plan 2007-8 had been held and work has begun to finalise the plan. It was stated that a final draft will be circulated to Branch Heads for comment before the Plan is published.

6.4 Group visits and family history talks were discussed. OSB no longer have the capacity to provide these and it was noted that more staff are required to deliver these talks. It was also noted that the Scottish Family History Centre may be expected to take over responsibility for such events once it is operational.

6.5 It was agreed that the Senior Management Assistant should co-ordinate offers from volunteers to work with NAS and to liaise with Branch Heads when such enquiries are received.

6.6 The rules for processing Flexi credit claims for doctors and dentists appointments were discussed with a view to deciding what the fairest way to operate this would be. It was agreed that Jim Grady prepare an options paper for further discussion.

Action Point Jim Grady will prepare an options paper regarding medical appointments flexi updates policy.
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6.7 Dave Brownlee reported that the First Minister and senior officials in SE were meeting to decide Scottish Executive Public Holidays for 2007-2008, in particular how to mark the proposed St Andrews Day holiday. NAS Public and Privelege holidays will be determined in consequence.

6.8 The suggestion that NAS host a visiting group of approximately 80 ICA SUV (Section on University and Research Institution Archives) archivists was discussed. It was decided that NAS would not be able to accommodate the large number of visitors in the light of building work on GRH.

6.9 The possible replacement of the messenger service with a system of self-collection of mail from individual pigeon holes was raised. It was explained that this proposal would be considered as part of the review of the Archive Attendant restructuring, but that no decision had yet been made.

6.9 Bruno Longmore alerted the Branch Heads that large numbers of files in RMU custody would be due for review by their owning branches towards the end of 2007 and explained that lists of such files would be provided to Branch Heads.

6.10 It was noted that Linda Ramsay would demonstrate the box-making service to Branch Heads at a future meeting held in TTH.

9. Date of Next Meeting

In accordance with the NAS meetings structure, the next Branch Heads' Meeting is due to fall on 17 May 2007. Jenny Cutts will check the suitability of that date with attendees nearer the time.

Jenny Cutts
16 March 2007