

**Local Partnership Board Meeting**  
**Tuesday 4 March 2008, 10:00am**  
**Lord Clerk Registers' Room, General Register House**

**Attendees:** George Mackenzie (Chair); Dave Brownlee (NAS); Jim Grady (NAS); Alex Cochrane (PCS); Philip Jackson (SG Employee Relations and Reward Team); James McCormack (Prospect); John Mitchell (Health and Safety); Maureen Morris (PCS); Scott Murray (Assistant Secretary PCS); Jenny Cutts (secretary).

**Apologies:** Louise Wilson (SG HR Business Partner); Jimmy Gilmour (PCS).

**1. Minutes of last meeting**

1. The minutes of the last meeting were approved and signed.

**2. Matters arising**

[2.1] As agreed at the previous meeting, Phillip Jackson and Louise Wilson were invited to attend the meeting.

**3. Staffing issues**

3.1 Dave Brownlee explained that since the last meeting 2 A4 archive attendants and 1 B1 DIU post had been filled. John Mitchell added that 1 full time cleaning post is jointly being advertised by NAS and GROS. It has been agreed to recruit 2 B1 casuals on fixed term contracts to fill gaps in curatorial positions arising from maternity leave. Secondment to a possible 'Famous Scots' project will also result in a vacancy which we would aim to fill on a temporary basis.

3.2 John Mitchell reported that members of the cleaning staff were disappointed that the qualifications bar prevented them for applying for A2 archive attendant roles. Dave Brownlee confirmed that the minimum educational qualifications requirement has been waived for cleaning posts, but that on this occasion qualifications had been asked for when advertising the archive attendant jobs. Some ICT skills are required for operating the Electronic Ordering System. There had been a good response to the advert this time around.

3.3 Alex Cochrane reported that colleagues were disappointed that the opportunity was not provided to apply for an additional A4 position which fell vacant as a result of promotion. Dave Brownlee explained that the second post fell vacant during the recruitment process and that it was expedient to recruit from candidates who had applied for the equivalent post. George Mackenzie added a degree of flexibility and interchangeability was expected amongst equivalent archive attendant posts based in different buildings. He urged all staff interested in pursuing promoted posts to apply when the opportunity arose. Alex Cochrane accepted these points but noted that more applications may have been received if it was known that there were 2 vacant posts.

3.4 Maureen Morris explained that GROS were offering early retirement schemes in line with core Scottish Government. The Scottish Government had not yet announced the early retirement offer but it is expected it will only apply to core government and not to Agency staff. The same terms and conditions apply to Agency as core SG staff. NAS staff may transfer to/from core posts, have the same terms and conditions as SG

staff and are members of the same trade unions, but are excluded from the offer. [Note: when the SG notice was issued NAS Management agreed to offer the same opportunity to staff. Subsequently, four members of NAS staff accepted early retirement/early severance offers]

3.5 Alex Cochrane asked about changes to the retirement age. It was clarified that there is now no compulsory retirement age but once a person reaches 60 years they may choose to retire.

3.6 James McCormack explained staff anxieties concerning continual increase in corporate objectives to be achieved with insufficient or diminishing resources. The Comprehensive Spending Review allocation is seen by staff as resulting in a real terms cut in NAS resources and there is understandable worries amongst union members that it is not feasible to deliver everything required. There is awareness that some additional projects undertaken are the result of political decisions and concerns have been expressed that core activities will suffer as a result. George Mackenzie acknowledged these concerns and accepts that NAS is committed to achieving a lot over the course of the SR07 period. Senior Management consider the corporate plan to be a useful tool in planning the delivery of NAS priorities as well as meeting the expectations of Scottish Ministers. The Keeper has made the Minister aware that certain objectives must be deferred or reduced if additional duties are to be completed. George Mackenzie added that additional objectives such as implementing the Register of Tartan and review of public records legislation raise the profile of NAS, which is an ambition repeatedly expressed by staff at Away Days.

3.7 James McCormack noted that the use of B1 casual staff to fill B2 curatorial roles would have consequences upon achievement of objectives and asked whether this would be reflected by the corporate plan. George Mackenzie agreed and explained that a planning meeting involving non executive directors and branch heads is scheduled to take place on 13 March 2008.

3.8 Jim Grady reported that advertisement for 2 FAB A2 posts have been circulated to archive attendants as the current archive attendant recruitment process will make it feasible to backfill the posts of successful candidates.

3.9 Senior management agreed that Prospect members review the advert for casual B1 curatorial officers before release.

## **4. Accommodation**

### **4.1 Short term accommodation**

It was reported that Accommodation Services Branch are arranging a number projects to improve our buildings before the end of this financial year. The staff tea rooms in each of the three buildings will be upgraded, the former smoking tea room in GRH will be converted into an audio-visual/meeting room to be used for video-conferencing, and WRH cabling will be upgraded. Apologies were made in advance for any disruption caused. Alex Cochrane asked whether the former smoking tea room should be re-used as a staff leisure facility. George Mackenzie noted that there had been no support for turning it into a staff gym and that the refurbished tea room should be large enough to meet staff requirements. It was added that the video-

conferencing facility would provide an additional meeting room and may be used for agreed NAS social activities as appropriate.

## **4.2 Long term accommodation**

Senior management explained that longer term records storage solutions are still being pursued. The Gateway Review had identified the need to build wider support for the business case. The Scottish Government continue plans to develop a cultural quarter at Granton. George Mackenzie reiterated the NAS preference to build on the site of Thomas Thomson House, but noted that plans involving Granton are more likely to be agreed and funded by Scottish Ministers. Plans must be underway in 5 years time if we are to acquire further accessions. The contribution of better appraisal and weeding of records was recognised. Staff and public facilities must also be considered in any accommodation plans. The Keeper reported that senior management have visited the Granton site and that it is envisaged that it will be a thriving housing and retail area with good transport links in 10 years time.

## **5. Progress on major projects**

### *5.1 Scottish Family History Service*

5.1.1 George Mackenzie reported that the Adam Dome repainting is nearing completion and stone conservation work has been performed on the medallions. Arrangements have been made to replace the glass panels which were damaged. Software to support the ScotlandsPeople Centre is still under development and the next meeting of the Scottish Family History Project Executive Committee should determine the opening date for the centre. It is anticipated that an event to mark the opening may be held in July 2008. An update on the garden was provided. The design and plants used have been agreed and planting will commence from 10 March 2008. George Mackenzie considers that the completed garden will be a visitor attraction in its own right. Panels explaining the rationale and themes for the garden will be installed.

5.1.2 John Mitchell asked about opportunities to open up General Register House to casual visitors as well as researchers. The ScotlandsPeople Centre will make the building more accessible and passers-by will be free to enter the shop and Adam Dome. It is intended that NAS will participate in the Doors Open Day in September 2008. Heritage Partnerships will run an event in GRH on 17<sup>th</sup> April to evaluate the feasibility of further corporate event bookings. Publicity photographs of the Lord Clerk Register's Room for future advertising purposes will be taken in May 2008.

### *5.2 Registers Archive Conversion*

A second digital imaging backshift has begun work in GRH in order that the critical mass of online images be reached sooner. The operating times of this backshift are under consideration in negotiation with unions. Extended SG security cover has been arranged.

### *5.3 Other projects*

5.3.1 The Scottish Register of Tartans Bill will be introduced to the Scottish Parliament on 25 March 2008 and an event will be held in GRH on the evening of 26 March 2008. It is expected that the national Register of Tartans will be established in October/November 2008. A formal launch on St Andrew's Day would be desirable.

ICTB are undertaking development of the Register which will be electronic and CLRB are establishing curatorial procedures. The match between the Register of Tartan and ScotlandsPeople interests was noted. George Mackenzie explained that additional funds to implement the Register of Tartan will be transferred from the Industry Directorate following Royal Assent to the legislation.

5.3.2 Proposals to run a series of Famous Scots exhibitions in conjunction with the Year of Homecoming 2009 were outlined. It is hoped these exhibitions would draw visitors to the ScotlandsPeople Centre and provide publicity for the partner organisations. There are plans to appoint a member of RSB staff to undertake research and to back fill that post by a fixed-term appointment for the duration of the project. Funding may be obtained from EventScotland to pay for the design and production costs of displays. The New Register House Dome is considered to be the best location for these exhibitions.

5.3.3 George Mackenzie explained that Ministers have directed him to consider joint working with RCAHMS as part of the public sector landscape review. It was a manifesto commitment to merge RCAHMS with Historic Scotland. The Scottish Government is now considering a number of different options. A potential joint project with RCAHMS, to be called *ScotlandsPlaces* was described. Building on the *ScotlandsPeople* model, *ScotlandsPlaces* would connect people, via images and words, with the evolution of the urban and rural landscapes over time. A joint meeting with RCAHMS will be held on 7 April 2008 to consider the project.

5.3.4 George Mackenzie reported agreement to provide the Scottish Emigration Museum with funding and explained that no staffing implications are connected to this support.

5.3.5 It was noted that progress reports about the valuation rolls project were presented to staff at the NAS Away Days held in January 2008. The backshift imaging team are also producing images of the Scottish Catholic Registers. The Catholic Church will pay for the indexing of the digitised sources which will be made available through ScotlandsPeople. Alex Cochrane commended the expediency of imaging valuation rolls regarding the handling difficulties they pose for staff and readers alike. Further decisions on the presentation of valuation roll indexes are required.

5.3.6 Alex Cochrane asked when the computer terminals will be moved from the Historical Search Room into their former location in the Robertson Wing. Staff have difficulty in distinguishing between historical and legal research being undertaken using the arrangement. There are problems relating to readers moving between manuscript consultation places and computer stations with consequences for the seat allocation element of the Electronic Ordering System. Many readers feel that the noise necessarily created by staff explaining use of the computer systems is in conflict with the Historical Search Room as a place for quiet research. George Mackenzie agreed that a separate space for demonstrating electronic sources is useful. There are suggestions that in future each manuscript desk might be equipped with a computer terminal to enable catalogue searching and document ordering. It is accepted that there are differing views on this proposal and a variety of factors, including document security, have to be considered.

## **6. Future of Microfilming Service**

Senior Management explained proposals to outsource the microfilm copying service. A commercial organisation which would produce microfilm copies in response to NAS customer orders has been identified. The creation of document surrogates using microfilm may be replaced by the production of microfilm from digital surrogates. Quality and response times are under investigation. If the microfilm unit is closed, staff will be transferred to digital imaging roles and the individuals in the unit have already been consulted. It is considered that many customer microfilm orders may have been generated by NAS rules on copying originally introduced for preservation reasons. Actual demand for microfilm products is likely to be small. Existing microfilm surrogates will be retained.

## **7. Health and Safety Issues**

7.1 Dave Brownlee reported that regular quarterly meetings of the Health and Safety Committee have been held. The NAS Health and Safety handbook has been updated and will soon be ready for publication on the NAS intranet. The Health and Safety section of the intranet will also be redesigned and updated. Two additional Health and Safety Training Liaison Officers are still required. It is expected that DSE assessments may be completed online in future. Manual handling training for archive attendants will be arranged.

7.2 The issue of transporting document trolleys across the ScotlandsPeople Centre was raised. Alex Cochrane explained that using lifts in order to avoid the ScotlandsPeople public areas would create additional work and that traversing the Reid Room presents the best health and safety option. George Mackenzie stated that the actual amount of trolley traffic needs to be identified. The possibility of crossing the Reid Room before and after the centre's opening hours was discussed. Transporting records to Digital Imaging Unit for copying is considered to pose more of a problem than HSR or LSR document productions. George Mackenzie accepted that this is an issue to be resolved and voiced preference that the Reid Room be reserved for quiet research during opening hours, but could be used as a route for trolleys outwith these times.

## **8. Any other business**

8.1 James McCormack asked about managed moves of curatorial officers. Senior management explained that plans to move staff remain, but are contingent upon clarification of Historical Search Section Head post. George Mackenzie accepts the need to effect staff movement in respect of project deployment and planned objectives requiring completion. The professional development purpose of curatorial officer moves is accepted.

8.2 Access to GRH and operation of the van service regarding Edinburgh tram works were discussed. Negotiations with Lothian and Borders Police for permission to use prohibited areas such as George Street are underway. Use of James Craig Walk for document delivery is also under discussion. It was noted that tram works are likely to affect Edinburgh for the next 3 years. Senior management understand that it might be necessary to revise the van timetable and have asked relevant staff to monitor the situation. It was expected that road works will cease for the duration of the Edinburgh Festival in August.

8.3 Redevelopment of the St James Quarter and possible ramifications for the Register House 'campus' of the planning options were discussed. Senior management are meeting the planners on 18<sup>th</sup> March and will lodge objections as necessary. A model of the proposed development is available for public consultation in the St James Centre.

8.4 Thanks were expressed for Alex Cochrane's involvement with the Local Partnership Board as this was the last meeting he will attend. PCS representation was considered. The continuing value of the Local Partnership Board was acknowledged as an appropriate forum for discussing issues.

**9. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting is due to be held in three months' time. Jenny Cutts will canvass for dates.

Jenny Cutts  
27 March 2008