

Local Partnership Board Meeting
Wednesday 27 August 2008, 10:00am
Lord Clerk Registers' Room, General Register House

Attendees: George Mackenzie (Chair); Dave Brownlee (NAS); Jim Grady (NAS); Malcolm Clark (PCS); Jimmy Gilmour (PCS); James McCormack (Prospect); Maureen Morris (PCS); John Nichols (PCS); Jenny Cutts (secretary).

Apologies: Scott Murray (Assistant Secretary PCS). The Keeper welcomed Malcolm and John to their first meeting of the LPB.

1. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were approved and signed.

2. Matters arising

[3.3] Malcolm Clark noted that re-advertisement is now required when additional posts become vacant and that it is not possible to appoint candidates who apply for one post to another which may arise subsequently.

3. Staffing issues

It was reported that recruitment for two Band A posts and two Band B (ICT) posts is underway. The B1 (ICT) external assessment centres are currently being held.

4. Accommodation

4.1 Short term accommodation

4.1.1 Building works for the ScotlandsPeople Centre have been completed including the shop and reception area. Preparations were in place for the phased opening of the Centre which began on 25 August 2008 with free 'taster' sessions for the public.

4.1.2 Staff tea rooms in all three buildings have been refurbished with input from staff members.

4.1.3 Re-cabling for West Register House (WRH) has been completed to improve network performance. Re-modelling of the WRH reception and exhibition area is under consideration.

4.1.4 It was confirmed that the Scottish Council on Archives (SCA) have been granted funding from the Scottish Government for three years. NAS will provide office accommodation to assist with the establishment of the SCA. A room within General Register House has been identified for this purpose.

4.2 Long term accommodation

4.2.1 Senior management explained that long term accommodation planning remains contingent upon Ministerial decisions and outcomes of the public sector landscape review, in particular the interfaces between NAS, RCAHMS and Historic Scotland . James McCormack asked about developments regarding Ministerial decisions. George Mackenzie explained that no decisions have yet been taken.

5. Progress on major projects

5.1 ScotlandsPeople Centre

5.1.1 The Adam Dome has been open to the public for free ScotlandsPeople taster sessions since Monday 27 August 2008 and the sessions are running well. Maureen Morris noted the benefits of the phased ScotlandsPeople Centre opening.

5.1.2 It was clarified that NAS meets accommodation and associated costs of the ScotlandsPeople Centre and that GROS meets staffing costs. The costs of the Centre staff are monitored under a separate ScotlandsPeople cost centre, but remain GROS staff with the same terms and conditions as other GROS (and NAS) staff. This status will remain for the foreseeable future.

5.1.3 A public launch event will be arranged for later in the year by which time testing will be complete and the Centre will be fully operational. It is expected that the Register of Tartans may also be ready and would complement the ScotlandsPeople resources already available to researchers. Wider advertising of the Centre will be addressed once we are confident about readiness for full opening.

5.1.4 It was noted that there are some outstanding snagging issues which require health and safety assessment. It was agreed that, where feasible, any issues of concern be dealt with directly using the Helpdesk, rather than relayed via the Health and Safety Committee which would take longer.

5.2 Registers Archive Conversion

The next release of the Registers Archive Conversion online search tool is being tested by Registers of Scotland. No date has been noted for full delivery of legal search business by Registers Direct and it is expected that the Legal Search Room at NAS will continue to operate well into 2009.

5.3 Register of Tartans

George Mackenzie explained that the Stage 2 Debate of the Tartans Bill will take place on 10 September and one amendment has been tabled. The electronic register has been developed by NAS and tested. Merger of data sets provided by the Scottish Tartans Authority and Scottish Tartan World Register is ongoing. It is anticipated that the Bill may be passed by October and Royal Assent given by November 2008. Successful joint working with tartan industry partners continues. Additional funding of £75,000 will be transferred from the Scottish Government to help cover the implementation and operational costs of running the Tartan Register in NAS. It was noted that although separate from the ScotlandsPeople Centre there is a natural fit with the genealogy service. The Keeper of the Register of Tartans will be obliged to make the register available freely and this will be achieved by an online service.

5.4 Famous Scots Project

It was explained that NAS is undertaking a project in conjunction with its ScotlandsPeople partners to research the family histories of selected living famous Scots. The Famous Scots project will be allied to Homecoming 2009 and exhibitions will be presented in the New Register House Dome, running for 2 months for each Famous Scot. Negotiations with potential celebrities are taking place and initial

genealogical research is being carried out. The aim is to attract publicity for ScotlandsPeople. The majority of funding for this project is being provided by EventScotland.

5.5 ScotlandsImages

It was reported that the commercial image library ScotlandsImages.com is live and that the first sales are pending. George Mackenzie described the image library and explained that NAS provides project management with collaboration from project partners, National Library of Scotland, National Trust for Scotland, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland and National Museums Scotland.

6. A2-A3 merger

6.1 It was explained that the Scottish Government's decision to merge A2 and A3 grades into a combined A Band had been implemented without consulting Agencies and NAS senior management had been given little notice. A series of meetings with staff had been held to discuss the merger. Consequences of the merger and issues of concern were discussed. Whereas the distinction between A2 and A3 posts within core Scottish Government has become less clear, this is not the case in Agencies. It was noted that within NAS A3 members of staff have routinely been given line management and team leader responsibilities. The main issues are considered to be reporting arrangements, staff morale and concerns about additional responsibilities. For example, it was noted that whereas many A Band administrative staff within NAS have obtained qualifications and were recruited for their specific skills, this requirement was waived for cleaning staff. These personnel are now all the same grade. Malcolm Clark added that there are similar concerns about the merger within other Agencies.

6.2 It was reported that the Scottish Government intend to carry out a review of A Band roles and that both NAS and other Agencies have made clear to HR that they wish to be fully involved in the review. Malcolm Clark explained that PCS continue to dispute the pay deal and asserted that merging grades is not the best solution for tackling low pay.

7. St Andrews Day holiday

7.1 Dave Brownlee explained that permission has been granted for NAS to remain open on the St Andrews Day public holiday and that an extra day to be added to annual leave allocations to be taken as a 'floating' day. The reasons for this decision were twofold. First, because it is not a generally-observed holiday at the moment, the public will expect NAS to be open as usual and second, as the holiday is intended to celebrate Scottish identity and culture, it would be appropriate for heritage institutions such as NAS to remain open.

7.2 George Mackenzie added that staff who wish to take annual leave on that day will be encouraged to do. Maureen Morris considered that it is less easy for front line staff who deal with the public to take annual leave on such days and added that there some staff will have to make additional childcare arrangements because schools will be closed. James McCormack noted that feedback from NAS staff who have expressed

an opinion to him is that a floating day is welcome. Colleagues do not necessarily wish to be absent from the office on 1 December 2008 (or on 30 November in subsequent years). No decision has not yet been communicated to staff, but a Staff Notice will be issued shortly. It was agreed to include some text indicating the PCS view that the office should be closed on St Andrews Day.

8. Health and Safety Issues

Dave Brownlee reported that the Health and Safety Committee continues to meet quarterly and that a section on theOracle will be added soon. Volunteers for extra Health and Safety Liaison Officers (HSLOs) were discussed with regard to training provision. Jim Grady added that extra Fire Wardens are always welcome. It was added that the fire safety routes have changed following completed building works and signage will be updated.

9. Any other business

9.1 James McCormack enquired about the public sector landscape review and joint working imperatives. Staff require clarity about the shared services agenda. George Mackenzie explained that Scottish Ministers have not specified the details of shared services but have laid down the requirement that Scottish Government organisations move in that direction. A number of options have been presented to Scottish Ministers regarding the manifesto commitment to merge RCAHMS with Historic Scotland. An outcome has not yet been announced.

9.2 It was added that NAS already engages in a variety of shared services practices and joint working projects.

9.3 Open Forums were explained. It was agreed that Maureen Morris will be informed in future when these sessions are arranged. It was also suggested that the Keeper's weekly diary which is published on theOracle is copied to Maureen Morris.

9.4 James McCormack asked whether the annual Staff Survey results would be published. Senior management agreed that this would be possible.

10. Date of Next Meeting

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

Jenny Cutts
28 August 2008