

CHARGING OPTIONS

Background

1. The ScotlandsPeople Family History Service (SFHS) Project Board has been examining potential charging options for the SFHS. This paper seeks the Executive Committee's approval of a charging structure for the SFHS.

Scope

2. The Executive Committee had previously agreed that the scope of the SFHS should differentiate between the services to be provided to the public and those other services that each organisation would normally offer as "core" business. Consequently, it was considered that the resources to be provided by the SFHS should consist of: -

GROS

- All GROS statutory indexes, records, census information and Old Parochial Registers currently open to the public in NRH, including the digital images of records as these are made available.

NAS

- The indexes to and digital images of all NAS Wills & Testaments records. Thereafter, further NAS records would be added as they are digitised and indexed.

Court of Lord Lyon

- The digitised and indexed Registers of Arms held by the Lord Lyon.

3. This implies that all other business of each organisation would be excluded from the SFHRS charging policy. So, for instance, an application

- to GROS for an official extract or for a particular search, or
- for a legal search in NAS records, or
- to the Lord Lyon for a coat of arms,

would not be within the scope of the SFHRS charging policy and current charging policies would apply.

Charging Option

4. The earlier papers had offered two potential charging options: a "free access option" and a "limited access option". This paper offers a variant of these two options, where the essential access is free but there are charges for a range of services.

5. Under this revised option a customer visiting the ScotlandsPeople campus who identifies at reception that he/she wishes to make use of the SFHS would have free access to a computer terminal that would provide the indexes and images of all of the SFHS records (as described in the section above on scope).

6. Also, under this option, any service that would be provided over and above simple access to the computer terminal (value-added services) would attract a charge (e.g. for assisted searches, prints of records etc). In addition, under this option, to maximise use of the service, it would be desirable to offer flexibility in search times. This is described below.

7. In the main GRH Adam Dome the SFHS could offer an Internet Café style searching facility. Access to the records would be free of charge but the searcher would normally be limited to 2 hours search time. (This could be extended if the GRH Dome had vacant places.) There would be 36 search places here.

8. The Reid Room (50 search places) would be made available mainly for assisted searches. Based upon research of assisted genealogy searches in various organisations and agencies, it is recommended that a fee of £15 per hour be applied for “one-to-one” assistance. “One –to-one” assistance would normally be limited to 1 hour per customer. This is sufficient to “kick-start” most family history searches and would allow the relatively small number of our staff to rest then move to other customers. This fee is at the lower end of the market. It could easily be set in the £15–£20 range and still compare well with other services on offer elsewhere. It is also recommended that a fee of £10 per day be applied to cover reservation of a guaranteed seat in the Reid Room (which would be essential in order to obtain “one-to-one” assistance.

9. The rear Matheson Dome of GRH (40 search places) would be used for overspill from the Reid Room (or exceptionally from the GRH Adam Dome) with charging on the same basis.

10. We would also propose to offer an annual ticket charge of £1,000 (currently GROS charge £1,500) as a special arrangement for professional genealogists. This would provide a guaranteed desk in the NRH East Search Room as well as lockers and business security. This would be regarded as a ‘facility charge’ so that such users would be essentially renting desk space and privacy, rather than paying for searching.

11. A range of other income generating activities would be undertaken, including the rental of the NRH Dome for seminars etc.

Recommendations

12. The Executive Committee previously agreed the principle that the SFHS should have a stable or reducing price regime, based on the current situation. It had been suggested earlier that the GROS pricing structure should be the **maximum** charge made for access to all of the SFHS resources. However, it had also been suggested that this fee level could be quite drastically reduced. In light of all of the above, the Project Board recommends that:

- for general access to the SFHS resources in the GRH Main Dome (and overspill) there should be **no charge**;
- for searching that requires “one-to-one” assistance or a dedicated search place, there should be a **charge**; and

- all possible opportunities should be explored to maximise income from additional services.

13. The effects of this are set out below and in the **Annex** to this paper. The figures are based on earlier models provided by the Project Board. This excludes GROS existing search income but includes all income from the ScotlandsPeople and SCAN internet sites to the SFHS. While the costs and existing income figures have not been updated from 2002-03 (as they remain a reasonable indicator), the latest predicted income from the SFHS value added services has been included. The latter is conservative. We have deliberately reduced the potential income by about one-half in order to provide a model based on low uptake. In brief, it would appear that the SFHS would operate at an annual **deficit** of about **£98k**. It is understood that this has been accepted as part of the GROS SR2004 settlement. A less conservative approach (including higher income from the Internet) could reduce that to an even more manageable figure.

Conclusion

14. The Executive Committee is invited to approve the charging regime set out above and to agree that the Project Board should continue to develop the SFHS on that basis.

ScotlandsPeople Income Model

Costs (2002-3 actuals)

| | |
|--------------------------------|------------------|
| GROS staff costs (@27.5 staff) | 547,000 |
| GROS direct costs | 63,000 |
| GROS indirect costs | 653,000 |
| Total RE costs | 1,263,000 |

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|------------------------|----------------|
| NAS staff costs | 245,000 |
| NAS direct costs | 2,000 |
| NAS indirect costs | 50,000 |
| Total HSR costs | 297,000 |

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|-----------------------------|------------------|
| Total Combined Costs | 1,560,000 |
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Income

Current RE Income (2002-3 actuals)

| | |
|---------------------|---------|
| Searches | |
| Microfilm | -37,000 |
| Microfiche | -3,000 |
| Miscellaneous sales | -29,000 |

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| Internet (09/2002-09/2003 - includes extracts) | -1,109,000 |
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|---|-------------------|
| Total current RE income (excluding extracts) | -1,178,000 |
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Current relevant NAS income

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| SCAN | -70,000 |
| Other | -5,000 |
| Other | 0 |
| Total current HSR income | -75,000 |

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| Expected CLL Search Income | - |
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Potential income (SFHRS products)

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| Unofficial copies (@£1.00) | -45,000 |
| Download images to DVD | -5,000 |
| One-to one assistance (£15 per hour) | -27,000 |
| Seat Charges Reid Room (& GRH Rear Dome)(£10 pd) | -72,000 |
| NRH East Search Room Annual Fees (£1,000 pa) | -27,000 |
| NRH Dome rentals (£300 per ½ day) | -15,000 |
| Group visits (£160 per group) | -18,000 |
| Total potential income | -209,000 |

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|-------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Total ScotlandsPeople income | -1,462,000 |
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| OPERATING DEFICIT | 98,000 |
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