

**Report of NAS Local Partnership Board**  
**Monday 30 January 2006**  
**Robertson Wing Conference Room, General Register House**

**Present:** George MacKenzie (Chair), Dave Brownlee, Jim Grady, Peter Anderson, Jimmy Gilmour (PCS), Alex Cochrane (PCS), John Mitchell (Health and Safety), James McCormack (Prospect), Gillian Roberts (Prospect), Scott Murray (SE CSEU), Morag Fyfe (Secretary)

**Apologies:** Brian McGarry (SE IERU), Cheryl Gedling (SE CSEU)

**1 Minutes of previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 October 2005 were accepted as a true record and copies were signed by the Keeper and James McCormack (Prospect). It was agreed that in future the minutes will be produced and circulated within three weeks, with a deadline set for responses.

**2 Matters arising**

(4 Silent Hours Security Arrangements) John Mitchell and Bob Phillips have met with SE Security and previous problems have been resolved. They will be meeting again in April to check progress.

**3 Staffing**

A number of issues were discussed:

- *Archive Attendant Management* – Following a meeting between Senior Management and PCS representatives on Monday, Scott Murray asked for a dedicated partnership board meeting to deal with staffing; in particular the changes to the archive attendant management which will affect Prospect members of staff too. He also requested a staffing structure chart for the new arrangement. Dave Brownlee agreed to pass a copy of the chart without names to PCS tomorrow. He will be happy to fill in names when these are known. The Keeper re-emphasised that although the structure is changing, the jobs AA staff will be doing will not change.
- *Archivist Staff* – James McCormack raised concerns over the loss of B3 and C1 archivist posts. Prospect see this as an erosion of posts at a senior level which will lead to problems for professional development for archivist staff as advancement is curtailed. Prospect appreciate the move to make B2 the professional standard for archivists, but believe there were more opportunities for advancement in previous years. Prospect believe that this erosion of senior staff also has an impact on the core function of the office, as the ability of the archivist group to influence decisions in planning and development has been eroded. Prospect do realise that other professional groups need to be included, but believe that archivists should be running the main projects. James also reported that some branch heads feel that they have no influence on the decisions which are being taken and that the branch heads meetings are not the forum for discussion that they should be. The Keeper did not deny the recent loss of posts and expressed his sympathy over this issue, but pointed out that NAS has to live within a tight staffing budget and that the new B2 staff have been paid for by not filling these posts. He is interested in any ideas that Prospect have on professional development issues, especially as later retirement ages will mean that the progression problem will not get much better in the future. The Keeper also stated

that he sees the main work of the NAS in the future to be more historical, with the drop of legal business, and to be in providing archival advice to outside bodies. Archivists will still be the core professionals in the office. He also emphasised that although things seem tight at the NAS there are still better promotion prospects here than in any other archive in Scotland. James responded to this point saying that Prospect do not dispute that pay and conditions are good compared with other archives, but they do not believe that the development is better as working in a local archive provides more varied work. The Keeper also said that he is keen to get input on issues from across the office and that he does not see the branch heads meeting as a 'rubber stamping' exercise. He remarked that the marketing away days, which pushed the issue out to a wider group were a success and he would be keen to repeat this exercise with other issues. Peter Anderson added that there is now greater input into decision making processes and more openness in the NAS than there had been previously.

James also asked about the marketing post which is due to become vacant. The Keeper responded that no decision has been made about this post yet.

#### **4 Professional Development**

James McCormack asked where the framework document for professional competencies for archivists, which was completed 2 years ago, currently stands, noting that he would wish competencies included for archivists within the Scottish Executive competency framework. Peter Anderson responded by stating that the framework was submitted to HR, but that he had not followed this up recently. He noted that it is always the intention to give staff as broad an experience as possible by moving them between posts, but that this is not always easy to do in a coherent way. James agreed that this is difficult to achieve within the current structures and noted that people who are unsuccessful in interviews could easily get stuck in a post and not move. The Keeper appreciated that staff need opportunities to do different types of work and that NAS posts did not necessarily provide a wide variety of tasks. He added that the framework document is still there as a guide for staff on professional development issues and that he is committed to the notion of professional development for all staff. He urged staff to use the framework competencies, even though they were not yet agreed with HR. James repeated the desire for the Scottish Executive to agree a recognised set of competencies. It was agreed that James and Gillian Roberts will liaise directly with Peter on this issue.

#### **5 Staff Survey**

James McCormack asked if there is an intention to publish the results to the 2005 staff survey. The Keeper responded that it is his intention to publish it as soon as possible. He has looked at it and takes very seriously the view expressed that Senior Management will not act on the survey. It is his intention, therefore, to set up a working group to look at the results of the survey and report back to him. This group will have an external chair (Arlene Chalmers) plus one or two members of staff from each of the A, B and C bands. The Keeper stressed that he will listen to the suggestions from the group.

#### **6 Projects**

The Keeper and Dave Brownlee provided updates on the various projects currently underway:

- *Scottish Family History Service* – A process for filling the A band posts has been agreed and will be completed by the end of March. There is an 8-10 week delay on the refurbishment work at GRH, but this should not interfere dramatically with the

project. The move of the Legal Search Room is due to take place in late April/May, to allow the work on the Adam Dome to start. James McCormack asked if there has been any decision made on the grading of the head of the SFHC post. The Keeper said that no decision has been made yet, but the post will be advertised across the Scottish Executive. The Project Board are looking at two possibilities. The post could take a major responsibility for running the centre, and report roughly quarterly to the Executive Committee, in which case C1 grading would be appropriate. Alternatively, more operational responsibility could remain with the Executive Committee, meaning it would meet monthly, and the manager would be graded at B3. The Keeper reminded the meeting that this is a joint venture and that the decision will be taken jointly with the Registrar General and the Lord Lyon.

- *Registers Archive Conversion* – Work is underway on the project, and it is expected it will take 2 years to achieve the critical mass of 70% of orders being delivered electronically. Alex Cochrane questioned whether this was achievable, as he had calculated that the 21,000 books which constitute the whole of Midlothian would take around 25 years to image. The Keeper reminded him that the critical mass is 70% of orders and that it is difficult to be precise about the number of volumes which will need to be digitised to achieve this. There is no intention at present to use the cameras at GRH for a second shift. Conversion of the microfiche sashes and creation of the index are being done by BT Syntegra. The original paper records will not leave NAS premises for security reasons.

*WSR Refurbishment* – This is on course and a temporary closure of the search room will need to be agreed to accommodate it. Due notice will be given of the closure and records, excluding plans, will be made available at GRH for the duration.

- *TTH2* – Due to pressure of other work the new date for submitting the case to the Minister will be in June. The Keeper, Peter Anderson and Bob Phillips will be meeting with the architect this week. TTH2 will mean more space and moving from 3 sites to 2. The Minister still has to agree to the building going ahead, and at present permission has only been granted to develop a detailed business case. It will be into the next decade before any new building would open. It is intended to have a small search room there, specialising in plans and special format material, and close WRH. Alex Cochrane noted that having plans viewed at TTH2 would be sensible, to minimise their movement.
- *TTH Shelving* – The money for reshelving 2A in TTH has been rolled into the next financial year and the work should take place in April 2006.

## **7 Cultural Strategy**

Gillian Roberts asked how the Scottish Family History Service will be affected by the NAS being part of the National Collections but the GROS not. The Keeper noted that this is a good point. He sees being part of the National Collections as a good thing, but he is keen to ensure that this does not interfere with NAS' good relations with other agencies such as the GROS and ROS. James McCormack asked if the NAS will be moved to the Education Department, pointing out that a lot of our work is not cultural and that TNA are based in the Department of Constitutional Affairs rather than in Culture. The Keeper responded by saying that at present the only thing which has changed is our Minister. NAS is still reporting to the Legal and Parliamentary Secretariat. They in turn now report on public records to the new Minister. This will not change in the near future. The Keeper pointed out that in Northern Ireland and Wales archives are part of culture. There are discussions ongoing about what the change in Minister will mean. James added that he would like to consult Prospect members if there are any representations to be made as any change could have strong implications for

the NAS, for example how working closer with other institutions will affect our buildings, conservators, jobs etc. The Keeper responded that it is too soon to comment on this at the moment but that James is right to raise the points.

Gillian Roberts asked if the NLS 1925 legislation, which is being amended to take in the Scottish Film Archive, will erode our responsibilities. The Keeper noted that he did respond to the move of, the film archive, but it was ultimately a decision for Scottish Screen to make. Patricia Fergusson is looking to the National Collections to take a lead in the development of standards for their sectors, and it may therefore be possible to do some of the things that were in the Public Records Strategy.

## **8 Vodafone Mast at WRH**

Gillian Roberts raised concern over the proposal to site a Vodafone mast in the WRH dome. She noted that access to it will be via the strong rooms which has serious security implications. Jimmy Gilmour added that access would be required on a regular basis for maintenance and routine checks. It is also of concern that our staff would have to come into close proximity with it when accessing the Dome to check for water etc. The Keeper said that security and our staff are indeed important issues to consider and that he wants to hear what staff and the expert have to say at the meetings on 15<sup>th</sup> February. He added that although this is an Edinburgh City Council initiative, we need to agree to it before the council can go ahead with it as we lease the building from them.

## **9 Health and Safety**

There was a brief update given by John Mitchell on health and safety issues. Jane Jamieson has resigned as chair of the Health and Safety Committee and a replacement will need to be appointed. Since the last meeting there have been a number of HSLOs taken on and the issue over the disposal of toners and photocopiers has been resolved. The Health and Safety plan from Rackline for TTH is available for those who wish to see it. A specialist H&S survey was recently undertaken at WRH and there are one or two action points to come out of it. Some minor maintenance will be required along with additional signage and staff will be reminded of best practice in regards to using pin boards or blu-tack on the walls. John also raised the issue of disabled access at WRH, as we have to make sure we are adhering to best practice in this regard. The Keeper recognised that WRH is difficult to access and noted that there is some flexibility for historic buildings. This is an issue which will be taken back to Bob Phillips.

## **10 AOCB**

None.

## **8 Date of Next Meeting**

It was agreed to hold an ad hoc meeting on staffing in the week beginning 20 February. Morag Fyfe will canvass for dates.