

**MINUTES OF BRANCH HEADS' MEETING
WEDNESDAY 6 SEPTEMBER 2006 at 2.30pm
MESS ROOM @ TTH**

Present: George MacKenzie, Dave Brownlee, David Brown, Jim Grady, Alison Horsburgh, Bruno Longmore, Laura Mitchell, Rob Mildren, Bob Phillips, Linda Ramsay

Apologies: Peter Anderson, Ian Hill

1. Minutes of the Meeting of 1 August 2006 and Matters Arising

The previous minutes were approved.

2. Staffing Issues

A number of issues were discussed.

- The external recruitment of B2 archivists is under way. The advertisements will appear the week beginning 11 September, in the Guardian and Arc. Copies are being sent to the UK archive schools and will also be posted on the archives-nra and scotarch listserves. The closing date is 27 September. An assessment centre will be held to select candidates, and NAS will require to manage this. As recruits are most likely to be required in Reader Services and Government Records branches, Alison Horsburgh and Bruno Longmore will take the lead in this. Guidance and training in the operation of assessment centres is to be made available via a professional adviser in HR. Other branch heads expressed interest in training opportunities.
- Dave Brownlee reported that he had drawn up the workforce plan, which sets out agreed staffing levels in each branch, in consultation with branch heads. He will now circulate a version for any final comments, prior to it being published on the Oracle by the end of next week. A copy of the NAS Resourcing Policy will be published at the same time.
- A permanent receptionist post for WRH will be advertised soon. Alison Horsburgh is drawing up a job description.
- Linda Ramsay reported that she would be picking up the threads of recruiting a B2 conservator shortly.

3. Reports

3.1 Finance

Jim Grady reported that the external audit by PricewaterhouseCoopers was well under way. He confirmed that NAS had completed the 2005-2006 year narrowly within operating budget, and that 2006-2007 would also be very tight. FAB were spending additional time on sorting out invoicing for the Family History Centre, following the receivership of the Peter Walker Group.

3.2 Conservation

Linda Ramsay reported that much of the branch time had been spent on surveying and conserving church records in preparation for digital imaging. Despite this, progress was being made with high priority repairs. The branch were about to start work on the sensitive photographs from JC processes, and had been identifying storage

capacity for the expanding photo collection. Bruno Longmore raised the question of conserving AF records which Shetland Islands Archive had requested for transfer under charge and superintendence. Around 130 volumes are considered unfit for production. It was agreed that GRB would negotiate SE approval for transfer, and that the agreement with Shetland would specify that unfit records were not to be produced. These can either be brought back to Edinburgh for attention, which may take up to 20 years, or, Shetland can fund an additional NAS conservator, to speed up the process.

3.3 Accommodation

Bob Phillips reported that work on the Dundas Room at New Register House had started, and that tenders for the remaining work on the ScotlandsPeople Centre, including GRH, were being evaluated. He expected a contractor to be appointed by November, and work to re-start by the end of that month. At TTH, work on shelving 2A had temporarily halted until new materials were delivered. The wood inserts in the shelving system were not as specified and would be replaced. The door in the mess room was to be repaired.

3.4 FoI

Bruno Longmore reported that GRB were monitoring the FoI Inbox during the absence of the Senior Management assistant. One current case concerned a political researcher who had requested details of his previous enquiries to NAS, SE and the Scotland Office. While it would be relatively simple for NAS to respond, it would be more difficult for SE and the SO. Hugh Hagan was leading a review of the SE RM Unit's use of a draft handbook for assessing how well organisations are complying with the records management code under section S61 of the Act. The handbook has been drafted by NAS, using a TNA document as its starting point.

3.5 ICT

Rob Mildren reported that CALM version 7 would be tested shortly, and that work to extend the Electronic Ordering System (EOS) and link it to the catalogue would start soon. Volunteers from each branch were needed to test another new feature, remote access to NAS networks. The branch were also looking into ways of improving performance of the network at WRH, which is 10 years old. Complete replacement, would involve significant building work and therefore be expensive. Wireless networking (WiFi) might help, but it was not clear how well this would work within the thick walls and internal structures of the building.

4. Document Security

George MacKenzie introduced the subject which was stimulated by a European questionnaire on thefts from archives. Although NAS had not, as far as is known, suffered thefts in the past 10 years, it had at an earlier period, and it was sensible to reconsider arrangements. The meeting felt NAS was potentially vulnerable in some areas, and that a review of arrangements, in the light of changes in other archives, and more attention to staff training, were desirable. The matter was remitted to the Security Committee, with the proviso that a major review would require to be managed as a project.

5. Any Other Business

- George MacKenzie reported that a majority of staff had voted in favour of having a Special Bonus Scheme and that we would therefore now set one up for the current year.
- Branch heads had not had feedback from staff in GRH about the recent notice on smoking breaks.
- Bruno Longmore reminded the meeting of the need to complete a form for line manager approval when FWH leave was being sought. It was agreed a note about this would be re-issued.
- Bruno Longmore also raised the problem of unauthorised parking by non-NAS staff at WRH, and Bob Phillips agreed to have chains placed between the bollards to stop this problem recurring.

6. Date of Next Meeting

Margaret Millar will canvas for dates in early October.

GPM

7 September 2006