

MINUTES OF BRANCH HEADS' MEETING
THURSDAY 10 JULY 2008 at 2:00pm
LORD CLERK REGISTER'S ROOM, GENERAL REGISTER HOUSE

Present: George MacKenzie, Peter Anderson, David Brown, Jim Grady, Ian Hill, Alison Horsburgh, Laura Mitchell, Hazel Anderson, Alison Lindsay, Tristram Clarke, Susan Corrigan, John McLintock, Jenny Cutts (secretary).

Apologies: Dave Brownlee, Bruno Longmore, Rob Mildren, Bob Phillips, Linda Ramsay.

1. Minutes of the last meeting (27 May 2008)

The minutes of the last meeting were approved.

2. Matters Arising

2.1 Tristram Clarke provided a brief presentation about the NAS branding refresh, and demonstrated a display panel featuring the new logo. Plans for implementing the new brand were explained. A licensing issue regarding fonts used requires resolution. Coordination of local adoption of the new brand was discussed. It is hoped that switchover to the new brand may be early August 2008. Templates and guidelines on using the brand will be made available to all staff from this time.

2.2. Rationale for low-key branding implementation was discussed. George Mackenzie explained that the cost of the brand refresh has been kept to a minimum and that there will not be a high profile launch event. It was agreed that the former logo be phased out by the end of 2008/9. New orders placed should include the new brand identity whereas existing supplies featuring the former logo are to be exhausted. The importance of branding NAS frontline areas in advance of the ScotlandsPeople Centre opening was emphasised in order to make a clear distinction in public services was emphasised.

3. Staffing issues

3.1 Alison Horsburgh confirmed policy on requests for career breaks. It was agreed that a casual replacement may be employed for a period of 51 weeks to cover a career break within Reader Services Branch.

3.2 The potential impact of ScotlandsPeople upon the Historical Search Room was discussed. Effects will be monitored in order to cope with demand. The presence of an archivist within the ScotlandsPeople areas was considered as a means to manage archival queries from ScotlandsPeople Centre customers and minimise visitor movement within General Register House.

3.3. David Brown reported that an A3 post within Outreach Services will become vacant following retirement. NAS interest will be sought before embarking upon redeployee procedures and advertisement within Scottish Government.

3.4 George Mackenzie reported that Margaret Millar's post within Senior Management Branch has not yet been filled.

3.5 Laura Mitchell explained that James McCormack will transfer from Government Records Branch to Court and Legal Records Branch.

3.6 Ian Hill explained that two successful candidates for B1 archivist trainee posts had been identified and job offers made.

3.7 Scottish Government policy on merging A2 and A3 bands together was discussed. The effects within NAS were identified, including assimilation arrangements.

4. Branch Reports

4.1 Court and Legal Records Branch

Laura Mitchell explained that redesign of Solemn database is under investigated, Fatal Accident Inquiries cataloguing continues and six summer weeders began work in June. The second meeting of the Lord President Records Experts Group has been held with Sheriff Principal Dunlop acting as Chair. Other records management projects are underway for Court of Session and High Court. NAS personnel are included on the project board of the Crown Office records management project. Work towards the Register of Tartans continues and data-sets will be amalgamated. The Digital Data Archive project was delayed by the necessity of rebuilding the server and back-up issues have been resolved. The unification of District and Justice of the Peace Courts has led to an increase in the number of enquiries directed to CLRB.

4.2 Information and Communications Technology

Hazel Anderson explained that the DDA server will be rebuilt in time for further development work to be carried out. WRH re-cabling work is expected to be completed by early August. Keith Dargie will announce changes to the Request for Change system. Approximately one quarter of 150,000 sasines have been digitised and the original volumes shelved in the Mathieson Dome. The digital capture of valuation rolls is ongoing. There are some technical difficulties concerning size to be resolved. Testing of the Scottish Documents website will be complete by 31 October 2008. Favourable comments have been received and image delivery is very satisfactory.

4.3 Reader Services Branch

Alison Horsburgh reported that two casual members of staff joined Reader Services in June 2008 to cover maternity leave in West Search Section and the transfer of a curatorial from Historical Search Section to work on the Famous Scots project, based in Outreach Services. Issues concerning the RAC search tool remain unresolved. It was reported that progress on Registers Direct 2 is running two years behind schedule with impact on plans for the Legal Search Room. Some pages of sasine abridgements are missing from digital surrogates and photocopies are being used to avoid consulting the original volumes. Staff badges and bags for readers have been ordered and will feature the new logo. A customer questionnaire will be devised and a user's meeting has been scheduled.

4.4 Outreach Services Branch

David Brown reported that ScotlandsImages.com is live, the video-conferencing suite has largely been completed and the Famous Scots project has been initiated. A meeting had been held with Edinburgh University PTVÉR organisers but that Edinburgh University has subsequently decided not to continue with annual PTVÉR visits. Other issues concerning NAS interaction with different customer bases were discussed including alternative methods for supporting postgraduate research. George Mackenzie noted that a balance of resources, effectiveness and benefits should be achieved. The extent to which specialist contact may be offered to postgraduate researchers was considered. David Brown proposed that a short regular NAS newsletter might be reinstated aimed at a general audience to give an overview of NAS activities. This could be posted on the website and made available in printed format for visitors to pick up in the search rooms.

4.5 Private Records Branch

Ian Hill reported that a deposit of records from the Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland (RIAS) may be expected and details were discussed. Other potential deposits include Sir John Spencer Ewart papers. It was suggested that temporary cataloguers may be contracted. The working group's review of NAS online catalogue is ongoing. The possibility of the Elgin papers being exported to Canada was discussed and involvement of UK Ministers described.

4.6 Finance and Administration Branch

Jim Grady reported that audit of NAS accounts 2007/08 will begin in August 2008. The 2008/09 budget has not been finalised and further bi-lateral discussions are required to agree reductions in individual branch bids. Travel and subsistence budgeting remains an issue. It was noted that branch heads would appreciate an early decision regarding budgets. It was explained that NAS will have financial responsibility for the ScotlandsPeople Centre in terms of support but will not be subsidised and NAS budget is protected. It is expected that the Centre will be self-financing.

4.7 Government Records Branch

Susan Corrigan reported progress on the Keeper's review of public records legislation in consequence of the SHAW report. A change of direction following advice from Scottish Government statistical analysts was described and further planning is underway. A meeting with the Office of the Scottish Information Commissioner was held to discuss the Scottish Information Commissioner's enforcement policy and the role of the Keeper of the Records of Scotland. The Memorandum of Understanding between OSIC and NAS will be revised. The Keeper added that NAS will take an advisory role in the OSIC enforcement strategy and NAS personnel will not perform major inspections of public authorities' Freedom of Information compliance. The Scottish Parliament is carrying out a records management project and retention schedules are regularly submitted to NAS for comment. The Scottish Government's e-records sustainability project concerning semi-current storage of electronic records was outlined. The deposit of 25,000 Ordnance Survey 20th century name books has been arranged. It was noted that a Geographical Information System is required for related finding aids.

4.8 Senior Management Branch

George Mackenzie reported that preparations are on target for an operational Register of Tartans by November 2008. One amendment to the Bill has been tabled in Parliament regarding woven samples. The Scottish Government's overarching purpose was discussed with emphasis on the National Outcomes. The Keeper noted that further work is required to align NAS business planning with this framework and that this will be a valuable undertaking. A separate discussion to concentrate on the Scotland Performs performance measurement context will be held. There was nothing to report regarding the Scottish Government's Review of the Public Sector Landscape.

5. Digital Policy (paper circulated)

5.1 Discussion of digital policy was held. Specific elements were picked out from the previous meeting on 27 May 2008 and the paper about defining and documenting policy decisions was reconsidered.

5.2 DIMCAT will be evaluated and decommissioned. It was suggested that a casual member of staff within ICT branch may undertake the bulk of this work under direction from relevant records branches. Options for administering restricted access on the Virtual Volumes system were discussed, and the possibility of renaming images and folders to this end was explained. It was reported that the process of converting tiff images to jpeg resulted in a copy being added to Virtual Volumes automatically.

5.3 Partially imaged documents were further considered and procedures for preventing further instances were suggested. A policy of not retaining digital images created in fulfilment of customer orders was raised as a partial imaging solution. It was noted that retention of parts of documents on microfilm reels had proved very problematic in the past. Policy and procedures are required for preventing partial imaging continuing in the future and a mechanism for identifying the existing cases is sought.

5.4 Differences in document numbering standards were also discussed. Procedures for the amendment of catalogue entries to reflect digital surrogates were explored.

5.5 The Keeper expressed support for the principles presented in the working group digital policy paper and highlighted the importance of defining criteria for approving digital copying requests. He requested that the working group identify remaining issues and produce detailed proposals for consideration.

6. Copyright (note circulated)

Bruno Longmore submitted a note about the administration of copyright in advance of the meeting. Susan Corrigan noted that there is a division between copyright policy within Government Records Branch and the facilitation of copyright administration with Outreach Services and Readers Services. Alison Horsburgh suggested that licensing is a growing area and that the Reuse of Public Sector Information also requires administration. George Mackenzie recommended that the issue be remitted to a subsequent meeting in order that Bruno Longmore may participate in the discussion.

7. Online catalogue recommendations (paper circulated)

7.1 Hazel Anderson reported that evaluation of the new NAS online catalogue following launch in April 2008 was ongoing. A working group is undertaking a review and considering future developments. User testing and observed search sessions are planned. Potential stakeholders to assist with testing were identified. Remote user feedback has been obtained indicating that the online catalogue searching is reliable and fast. Branch heads echoed these findings and reported additional positive feedback from various stakeholders. Hazel Anderson noted that the internal version of the online catalogue operates less quickly because it is hosted by an older server. David Brown recorded thanks to the system developer, Helen Bull.

7.2 George Mackenzie noted the recommendations outlined in the circulated paper. A final report will be submitted by the working group in due course. There was some discussion of proposed changes to the terminology with particular regard to 'Place' and 'Place Authority'. It was suggested that all references to place be confined to the advanced search page to avoid misleading researchers. Similar concerns were expressed regarding 'Name Authorities'.

7.3 Methods for effectively conveying access status were considered. The traffic lights system currently employed will be replaced with live links to the appropriate NAS catalogue field in order to make customers aware of open, closed, note held, restricted and exempt access conditions.

8. Any other business

8.1 Branch Heads were consulted about continuation of contributions to the Keeper's weekly diary published on theOracle. It was noted that section managers can assist in writing branch heads diaries. The weekly diary written by the Keeper is considered to be very useful and is read across the office and frequently consulted for information subsequently. It was resolved that opinion be sought from staff members about usefulness of branch heads contributions.

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| Action: Jenny Cutts to consult staff. |
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8.2 The Keeper explained that he finds Open Forums very useful and will raise information sharing mechanisms for discussion at the next meeting.

8.3 Laura Mitchell ask about corporate plan progress reporting. Progress templates have been issued and include fields for reporting against NAS key performance indicators. Key performance indicator 7 relates to the speed of replies to correspondence (% within 20 days). George Mackenzie confirmed that this relates to correspondence that branches already record using the Online Central Enquiry System (OCES). Categories with 20 day deadlines include enquiries dealt with by HSR, WSR, LSR, GRB, CLRB, NRAS, FOI (20 day) enquiries for corporate information and Environmental Information Regulations enquiries. Other enquiries with different deadlines are parental body referral FOI enquiries (30 days), and Data Protection enquiries (40 days).

8.4 It was added that changes are planned for amending OCES. Alison Horsburgh, the system owner, explained that categories and sub-categories may be added as

necessary to meet branch requirements. George Mackenzie added that the number of enquiries are also requested in order that the speed of replies statistics given is meaningful.

8.5 Jim Grady reminded attendees that all staff are to use the Scottish Government e-HR system and that there is a link from theOracle.

9. Date of Next Meeting

Jenny Cutts will canvass for the date of the next meeting.

Jenny Cutts
6 August 2008