

**MINUTES OF BRANCH HEADS' MEETING
THURSDAY 18 SEPTEMBER 2008 at 2:00pm
MEETING ROOM, THOMAS THOMSON HOUSE**

Present: George MacKenzie, Dave Brownlee, Peter Anderson, David Brown, Jane Brown, Jim Grady, Alison Horsburgh, Bruno Longmore, Rob Mildren, Linda Ramsay, Alan Borthwick, Jenny Cutts (secretary).

Apologies: Ian Hill, Bob Phillips.

1. Minutes of the last meeting (10 July 2008)

The minutes of the last meeting were approved.

2. Matters Arising

2.1 [8.1] Following consultation with staff members the Keeper decided that additional contributions to the Keeper's weekly diary from branch heads and deputy keepers should continue. A rota for publication on the Oracle has been circulated by Jenny Cutts.

2.2 David Brown reported that a consignment of mugs featuring the new brand identity had been delivered and a discount is being negotiated due to an error with font colour used. Each member of staff will receive an NAS mug as a gift.

2.3 [5.2] Dave Brownlee reported that a group has been established to review DIMCAT content for migration or disposal.

3. Staffing issues

3.1 The Keeper reported that the Senior Management Branch vacancy has been filled and the Assistant Business Manager will take up post on 1 October 2008.

3.2 James McCormack has transferred to Court and Legal Records Branch and John Simmons has replaced him as Records Manager within Government Records Branch.

3.3 Reader Services Branch trainee archivists are in post and John Fairgrieve has moved into the A3 search room officer post that has been vacated in consequence of a domestic career break.

3.4 In Outreach Services Branch, Matthew Fawcett has replaced Marilyn Mazs as Library Assistant.

3.5 Rob Mildren noted his involvement in an ICT recruitment board, from which two candidates were selected to fill NAS vacancies.

3.6 A query was raised about a difference in pay between Pertemps engaged by NAS and Pertemps staff engaged by the core Scottish Government. Jim Grady asserted that

there should be no difference and suggested that the discrepancy may relate to post grading.

Action: Jim Grady to investigate reported discrepancy regarding Pertemps staff.

3.7 George Mackenzie noted that Scottish Government HR recognise that recruitment processes could be improved and a web-based system to administer internal and external recruitment is under development.

3.8 A query was raised about the implementation of increased annual leave allowance for staff with 5-10 years service. Dave Brownlee explained that as annual leave is administered locally in NAS rather than by using the e-HR system, it will be for line managers to update their own staff's leave records. Dave Brownlee agreed to issue a note to NAS staff to determine who might be eligible for additional leave, then to follow this up with HR and in turn advise line managers as appropriate.

Action: Dave Brownlee will establish annual leave entitlement and issue guidance.

3.9 It was confirmed that for part-time colleagues annual leave entitlement for the St Andrews Day holiday must be calculated pro-rata. It was noted that informal feedback from NAS staff indicated little demand for NAS to be closed on 1 December 2008.

4. e-HR sickness absence

4.1 Sickness absence and e-HR were discussed. George Mackenzie noted that line managers are only required to approve sickness absence entries within e-HR and return to work interviews are recorded within the "comments" field.

4.2 The in-house SL9 system automatically generated notifications for the Keeper's attention which is not possible with the e-HR system. Options for monitoring sickness absence were discussed. It was agreed that reinstating the SL9 system to operate in tandem with e-HR was not desirable. Suggestions were made that flexi updates for sickness absence could be used as the basis of in-house monitoring. It was noted that only the Keeper, Deputy Keepers and Pertemps staff are not on the flexi system.

4.3 The Keeper emphasised that all line managers be aware of their responsibilities within e-HR with regard to opening the e-HR record on the first day of a sickness absence.

5. A2-A3 merger

5.1 George Mackenzie noted that HR expect the review of the A band to be completed by the end of January 2009 though the unions are sceptical about this time-frame. A detailed discussion of the problems caused by merger of the A2 and A3 grades was held. The Keeper asked branch heads for subsequent feedback about how staff members are responding to these changes. It was indicated that structures across the office require review in consequence. It was accepted that A4 and B1 band staff may also be directly affected by the A2-A3 merger. Meantime NAS will participate fully in the forthcoming review of Band A.

6. Branch Reports

6.1 Alison Horsburgh reported that Reader Services Branch continue to consider digital policy issues. A 16mm microfilm reader/printer is required for consulting modern wills and the present machine requires repair. Two family history talks are provided per day for ScotlandsPeople customers and difficulties in providing speakers are being encountered. It was suggested that the number of family history talks be reduced. The Keeper asked that Reader Services Branch propose a workable solution.

6.2 Linda Ramsay explained that the NAS van service is seriously compromised by ongoing road works in Edinburgh. An issue regarding the flow and volume of valuation rolls returned to NAS following digitisation was noted.

6.3 Bruno Longmore reported on Government Records Branch involvement with the Review of Public Records Legislation Project. The Project Board has been established and Project Initiation Document approved. The branch is also working with a number of Public Inquiries with regard to preservation of the archival record and the provision of related records management advice. He explained that an article regarding the Scottish Government's misplacement of a retransmitted file had been published in the Sunday Times. Funding for a joint project regarding Military Tribunal Appeals was not secured by the partner university. However it has been decided that NAS will continue with the project as planned in order to capitalise on the work already undertaken. A suitable volunteer will be sought from Edinburgh University undergraduate history students to further this project.

6.4 Rob Mildren provided updates on the valuation rolls digitisation programme and reported that over 1 million images have been captured. Index entries are also progressing well. Linda Ramsay noted that volumes are not being returned in a gradual manner and processing them requires overtime. Jim Grady noted that workflow schedules and back-up facilities in the event of camera failure were built into the contract and should be adhered to. Testing of the system to provide access to the index entries and images will begin in October 2008.

6.5 Microfilm copies were discussed. Service providers for producing customer copies on microfilm have been investigated and a test order has been processed for microfilm duplication. No customers have placed orders for copies on microfilm reels over the past 8 months. It was noted that a survey of microfilm surrogates had previously been conducted by the Historical Search Section and details added to Calm. It was agreed that a review to identify microfilm surrogates for migration to virtual volumes would be beneficial. The Keeper asked that comprehensive information be obtained regarding substantial series within the microfilm collection that are suitable for migration. Bruno Longmore added that there are also born microfilm original records that could also be digitally imaged.

6.6 Jane Brown reported that the summer weeding programme had been successful and provided updates on the various records management groups established by the Scottish Courts to which Court and Legal Records Branch are providing advice. It was also noted that the Digital Data Archive is currently undergoing testing. Issues

relating to the large volume of photographs included within CLRB accessions were discussed.

6.7 David Brown reported that the NAS programme for schools had been announced and bookings are being taken. Involvement in the Scottish Learning Festival 2008 was outlined. It was noted that the Image Library has been operating for two months, sales have been made and a formal launch and publicity drive are to follow. A copyright issue may be resolved which may enable British Rail photographs to be added to the image library stock. Permission to use the Forth Rail photographs is expected to be forthcoming.

6.8 It was reported that a Local Studies Co-ordinator will be appointed by Dumfries and Galloway Council. It is intended that the Keeper emphasise that “proper arrangements” would include the necessity that this appointee be either a qualified archivist or contracted to pursue that qualification following appointment.

6.9 Alan Borthwick explained the involvement of Private Records Branch in the National Archives Network Futures Group. The future role of the Scottish Council on Archives (SCA) was considered with regard to various activities within the archival sector.

6.6 The Keeper noted that most Senior Management Branch business has already been reported in the Keeper’s weekly diary. A meeting between the Keeper, Peter Anderson, and the Chair and Executive Director of the Society of Archivists will be scheduled. Dave Brownlee reported that the autumn budget revision submission was sent to Scottish Government on 17 September 2008.

7. Any other business

7.1 It was noted that NAS would be participating in the Doors Open Day Event on 27 September 2008 in collaboration with the General Register Office for Scotland and the Court of the Lord Lyon. Twenty four members of staff have volunteered to participate and it was accepted that overtime expenditure in line with normal rules will be incurred as a consequence of our supporting Doors Open Day..

8. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on 28 October 2008.

Jenny Cutts
14 October 2008