

**MINUTES OF BRANCH HEADS' MEETING
TUESDAY 26 SEPTEMBER 2007 at 2:30pm
MEETING ROOM, THOMAS THOMSON HOUSE**

Present: George MacKenzie, Peter Anderson, Dave Brownlee, David Brown, Ian Hill, Alison Horsburgh, Bruno Longmore, Rob Mildren, Laura Mitchell, Linda Ramsay, Jenny Cutts (secretary)

Apologies: Jim Grady, Bob Phillips.

1. Minutes of the Meeting of 23 August 2007

1.1 The previous minutes were approved.

2. Matters arising

No matters were arising.

3. Staffing issues

3.1 The deployment of curatorial staff was considered. It was noted that Peter Anderson had agreed to survey the current situation and note potential staff moves. It was stated that some of the B3 archivist had been in post for a long time and that movement at that level might also be discussed. George Mackenzie invited branch heads to consider B3 staff and explained that there should be a presumption against such staff members remaining in post indefinitely but that senior management would be sympathetic toward reasons for retaining staff within their current branches and roles. Maternity leave requirements were also considered.

3.2 Progress by staff undertaking archival studies distance learning courses was considered, including the likely dates when staff members in the 'waiting list' would be able to benefit from the NAS policy on supporting two members of staff in any one financial year. It was agreed that the relevant branch heads should discuss this with the individuals involved and that Bruno Longmore would provide an updated progress report.

Action: Bruno Longmore to provide an updated progress report.

3.3. Rob Mildren reported on the recent ICTB recruitment exercise which shared an Assessment Centre with RERAD (Rural and Environment Research and Analysis Directorate) and which had proved successful. Three B1's were appointed to work with NAS ICT Branch.

3.4 It was noted that a full complement of archive attendants were in employment and that provision was in place to cover two anticipated retirements.

3.5 It was reported that one B2 conservator had been appointed and was expected to begin work in November at the earliest. One vacancy remained unfilled and another full time conservation post is currently subject to long term sick leave.

3.6 It was noted that the number of Pertemps used by Reader Services Branch had been reduced from five to two.

3.7 A meeting had been held between senior management and Jacqui Jones, Head of Employee Relations concerning initiatives for non-monetary rewards but that policy initiatives must first be established within Scottish Government before being adopted by NAS.

3.8 Continuing difficulties with the HR service were discussed. Both ICTB and CSB had received little assistance in their recent recruitment processes and it was noted that the recruitment of specialist staff, as opposed to general civil servants, still required significant efforts.

3.9 Clarification of the performance appraisal system was sought. It was suggested that the Development Centre might be approached for further training regarding the current performance appraisal system. It was also noted that as NAS is an agency focussing on service delivery rather than government policy, its staff may have difficulty in fulfilling all the requirements of the Skills for Success element. The possibility of secondments to work in Scottish Government was discussed and it was suggested that George Mackenzie discuss this further with Heather Jack, Deputy Director, Europe, External Affairs and Culture.

Action: Dave Brownlee to discuss performance appraisal training with Arlene Chalmers.

4. Branch Reports

4.1 Conservation Services Branch

Linda Ramsay reported that CSB are currently understaffed and one post is subject to long term sick leave. It was reported that the freezers required for acetate photographic media had been delivered. Discussion of planned records moves with senior management was required, particularly with regard to potential solutions to store room 4D at WRH and inadequate fire escape routes. The NAS box making unit maintains a busy service to St Andrews University and to the Royal College of Nursing Archives. It was reported that the branch continued to be busy making arrangements for a variety of document exhibition. The deposit of a large volume of bankruptcy records was anticipated and it was asserted that advance warning from cataloguing branches was essential in such events. With regard to incident control, the suggestion was made that business continuity software be discussed with branch heads. The recent floods at NLS were described and it was noted that the NAS sprinkler system differs to that used by NLS. George Mackenzie expressed gratitude for the help and assistance which CSB provided to NLS in response to the incident.

4.2 Reader Services Branch

Alison Horsburgh reported that positive feedback had been received regarding the new garden entrance. A security officer was now in place in the reception area there. It was noted that the RAC search tool now works 90-95% of the time and that the legal search companies were content with its performance. Problems and omissions continue to be reported as necessary. Guidance from Registers of Scotland has been produced but improvements are required as this guidance assume a working knowledge of the Registers of Sasines whereas researchers require instruction in the record series as well as the technical aspects of the search tool. It was further reported that feedback from the digital policy working groups would also refer to records storage in consequence of the Ministerial decision not to support TTH2. Thanks were expressed for the provision of five extra public computers in the Historical Search Room which had proved successful in alleviating queues to search the catalogue and to access other electronic research tools, such as Virtual Volumes. A problem had been experienced regarding simultaneous failure of both the productions printers in HSR

and it had been found that this was caused by the use of pre-printed paper. It was noted that reliance upon technology for service delivery should be included in the NAS risk register. NAS will participate in the PSQG (Public Services Quality Group) survey between 29 October and 7 December 2007 and guidance for staff to implement this would be forthcoming. It was clarified that the digital policy working groups had all met twice and that papers would be submitted to the Branch Heads meeting in October 2007.

4.3 Private Records Branch

Ian Hill reported that Stacey Capner had filled the B1 graduate trainee archivist post within the branch and that Alison Diamond's post, currently seconded from PRB, was due to return immanently. It was noted that the workshop meeting to discuss the in-house development of a replacement OPAC had been hosted and that final details of the specification had been finalised with Helen Bull, the project developer. A seminar on NAS cataloguing standards will be scheduled to take place within the next six weeks. It was also noted that the branch had contributed to an online exhibition regarding the QE2.

4.4 Information and Communications Technology Branch

Rob Mildren reported that the Valuation Rolls digitisation project was in hand and that Jim Grady was not present at the meeting as he was working on the tendering process. Appointment of contractors was consequently immanent. He reported that the ScottishDocuments website had been successfully redeveloped and that the virtual volumes system would eventually be replaced by a browser based system for internal and external access.

4.5 Government Records Branch

Bruno Longmore reported that the selection policy concerning EDRM records had been finalised with SG Information Management Unit and will be submitted for approval to NAS senior management and to SG Management Group. It was reported that TNA have approached Scottish Government regarding a digital continuity project regarding interim storage of semi-current electronic records and that SG have expressed an interest in this. The intention is that TNA provide this solution across UK government including the Scottish Government free of charge. George Mackenzie reported that NAS maintains a dialogue with TNA regarding this proposal and that very large storage capacity and off-line requirements are envisaged. He also emphasised the importance of NAS involvement in discussions in order that this project not interfere with recordkeeping issues and relationships between NAS and Scottish Government. Bruno Longmore reported on progress with the Digital Data Archive project and described a pilot audit of the DDA using the DRAMBORA toolkit which had been undertaken by Digital Curation Centre. NAS await the final report but positive results have been indicated. Discussions with the Scottish Parliament have been renewed following a hiatus and appropriate contacts are being redeveloped. The 'Managing our digital records' project lead by NAS Records Manager James McCormack is well underway and presentations for all staff will be forthcoming. GRB has also been involved in discussions with GROS concerning 2001 Census data and DDA ingest and these issues are currently under investigation. It was also reported that Dr Hugh Hagan had attended a conference in Erkutsk, Siberia, and was expected to give a presentation about this to interested members of staff in due course. Government Records Branch have agreed to host another volunteer, Rachel Pike, who is looking for archival experience before obtaining a place on a relevant course. Jenny Cutts explained that she had met with Jane Owen-Brennan, Third Sector Team, Directorate of Public Services Reform, regarding alignment of NAS volunteer policy and

procedures with those of Scottish Government and indicated that formalisation of NAS volunteer placements would be forthcoming.

4.6 Outreach Services Branch

David Brown reported that the union exhibition had been launched at the Scottish Parliament and that the 'Union for a' that' booklet would be finished within the next two weeks. Concern regarding archive provision in Dumfries and Galloway was expressed and it was reported that it is likely that the Health Board archivist there will not be replaced. The Keeper had sent a letter to Dumfries and Galloway council but no actionable proposals had been detailed in the response. It was noted that a visit by David Brown and Linda Ramsay was planned and that withdrawal of archives held there under Charge and Superintendence would be considered. It was noted that an interim measure might be to allow the documents to remain in place but to forbid their production to researchers while conditions remain unsatisfactory.

4.7 Court and Legal Records Branch

Laura Mitchell reported that the summer weeders had completed their placements and had reduced 105 metres of Sheriff Court material to 23 metres. A document security issue regarding retransmission of Madeleine Smith documents to the High Court was described. It was noted that measures were in place to protect such documents in similar circumstances and that retransmission requests for documents over 30 years old would be investigated.

4.8 Senior Management Branch

4.8.1 Senior management clarified that movement of trolleys through the Reid Room would be forbidden in order to prevent damage. It was suggested that similar trolley damage sustained by various parts of the building might be repaired in order that further damage would be discouraged. Linda Ramsay reported that some of the old style trolleys were still in operation but that their removal would be effected. It was further reported that the Mathieson dome is expected to be handed over by the end of November 2007 and that March 2008 remained the target date for opening the Scottish Family History Centre. A solution for dealing with 15 layers of paint in the Adam Dome had been found and it was noted that the end result would be pale paint colours and gilding. It was stated that staff members are allowed to pass through the Reid Room in order to travel between the East and West sides of GRH and it was suggested that the new carpet there could be protected by plastic strips.

Action: Dave Brownlee to discuss carpet protection with ASB.
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4.8.2 In Jim Grady's absence, Dave Brownlee reported on NAS Finance. It was reported that the autumn budget review had been undertaken and that the £2m lost in impairment charges last year would be made available in 2008-2009. The £1m relating to the Valuation Roll project was scheduled for review in the spring. The Spending Review would inform 2008-2009 budget in due course but details were not yet known. It is expected that the Chancellor of the Exchequer will announce Scottish Government allocation in October 2007. The five Ministerial priorities reflecting SNP policy were discussed: A Wealthier and Fairer Scotland; A Smarter Scotland; A Healthier Scotland; A Safer and Stronger Scotland; A Greener Scotland. It was noted that NAS can be shown to contribute to some of these in respect of tourism, facilitating the Scottish legal profession and Scottish identity. George Mackenzie explained that as NAS is a service providing department, delivery of those services must continue whatever the government policy priorities are.

4.8.3 George Mackenzie reported on progress towards establishment of the Register of Tartan and explained that Royal Assent to the private members Bill brought by Conservative MSP Jamie McGrigor was expected to be granted in October 2008 and that this approach reflected a new style of government. The role of NAS in delivering the prototype Register by mid 2008 was outlined and it was noted that Keith Dargie had organised NAS visits to the existing tartan registers. It was reported that Alison Diamond is expected to work on developing tartan registration expertise from January 2008 for a period of three months involving work with the relevant existing organisations. It was noted that discussion of Alison Diamond's attachment to CLRB or to another branch whilst undertaking this role was required.

5. Non Executive Directors

The appointment of two non executive directors: Frank Manson and Professor Michael Moss was announced. It was noted that these appointments occur within challenging period in the management of NAS and will endure for an initial period of three years with an option to extend by mutually agreement. Further details concerning their roles, terms and conditions may be obtained from the senior management assistant upon request. It was noted that additional non executive directors may be appointed in due course. The revision of NAS Framework Agreement was considered. George Mackenzie explained his view of NAS' role in providing advice to Ministers and explained that a shared National Collections Board had been suggested again by SG. It was noted that the appointed non executive directors would attend the meeting of NAS Management Board in January 2008.

6. Long term accommodation

6.1 Long term accommodation plans were discussed. It was noted that following the Ministerial decision not to support building TTH2, 'Plan B' was under consideration. One option would be to do the minimum required to maintain West Register House for the next 5 years and to present further options thereafter. Potential work on WRH may include solving the problem which store room 4D presents in terms of insufficient fire escape routes, and measures to improve the lift, electricity, plumbing, disabled access and ICT cabling there. It was reported that a Ministerial submission included detailed proposals would be made in November 2007 and that long term plans concerning retention or relinquishment of WRH are required. It was reiterated that the maintenance of WRH now more presents a more pressing concern than the requirement for additional records storage.

6.2 George Mackenzie reported that options to consider include: a smaller addition to Thomas Thomson House; building on the Granton site; remote storage for seldom used or digitised records; alternative storage located on TTH site controlled by NAS; and the utilisation of 'secondary protection' for documents stored in sub- BS5454 conditions. It was confirmed that Ministers are not expected to reconsider business plans for the construction of TTH2 which has already been declined. It was noted however that Linda Fabiani, Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture, was positive with regards to finding a solution for NAS long term accommodation needs. A discussion was held concerning the position of NAS if sub-standard document storage were used for the national archives in respect of the Keeper's ability to instruct local authorities to provide 'proper arrangements'. Peter Anderson reported that he had advised the RCAHMS Granton project steering group that in his opinion all of the National Collections should ensure BS5454 compatible storage conditions for their holdings. The possibility of NAS area offices, commensurate with those attached to PRONI, (Public Record Office of Northern Ireland), were suggested as was the possibility of links with local authority archives.

6.3 It was noted that the Granton site was large enough to accommodate a variety of National Collections buildings and facilities and reported that NLS aims to relocate its conservation services there. It was clarified that RCAHMS is planning a new building on the site and that the National Museums and National Galleries intend to use it for additional storage. The Scottish Government aims to create a 'cultural quarter' which will be accessible via the planned tram system and will contribute to the socio-economic reinvigoration of that area. Senior management expressed the view that NAS should be included in any visitors centre sited at Granton. It was confirmed that the accommodation consultants were still working on long term accommodation options but that their brief had been changed in accordance with Ministerial decisions.

7. Smoking Policy

Dave Brownlee explained that practices relating to smoking breaks differed between different operational areas and that such inconsistency causes resentment and confusion. It was noted that there is no Scottish Government policy in place but that such a policy was expected soon. NAS policy on smoking breaks was restated. Staff may smoke during their regular tea and lunch breaks but are not allowed additional time for smoking. Other smoking breaks taken outwith the standard break periods are permissible only if individuals have keyed out to do so. The feasibility of considering smoking habits in recruitment was considered. It was affirmed that it would be illegal to deny employment on the grounds that the applicant was a heavy smoker but agreed that corporate policy on smoking breaks may be explained to candidates during the application process. It was thought that stressing the particular concerns of archival institutions with regard to smoking and fires might also be expressed to candidates. It was further noted that smoking policy would be explained to new recruits by the induction literature they are provided with. Further details were discussed and it was stated that members of staff should let their line managers know when they are leaving the building for a smoking break. Smoking facilities for visiting members of the public were also discussed and reference made to the provision of 'smoking points' outside hospitals. It was noted that SFHS plans originally included a public smoking shelter situated near the garden entrance but that this had been subsequently changed.

8. Any other business

With reference to potential curatorial staff moves, Ian Hill asked whether NAS operated a policy on rotating staff whether or not they had requested a move at their in-year review. It was noted that there is a discrepancy between managed moves and internally advertised vacancies and that the situation was unclear to staff. George Mackenzie stated that in principle there remains the intention to rotate staff across posts and branches.

9. Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 23 October 2007.

Jenny Cutts

9 October 2007