

Title: The National Archives User Forum

Date of Meeting: Thursday 16 July 2009, 12:30pm

Location: Talks Room

Attendees Staff

JJ: Jeff James, Director of Operations and Services (Chair)  
DP: Dave Priest, Production Coordination Manager  
JM: Jackie Marfleet, Head of Advice and Records Knowledge  
PWS: Paul Sturm, Quality Manager  
JL: James Lawson, Public Services Development (secretary)  
CC: Chris Cooper, Head of Directorate Planning  
IB: Isabelle Biraben, Senior Project Manager  
JG: Jone Garmendia, Catalogue Manager  
II: Ian Ireland, Public Services Development (minutes)  
EK: Esi Kpeglo, Human Resources Manager

Readers: Sally Neville, Kay Payne, Doreen Heywood, Joyce Hoad, John Conway, Janet MacDonald, Ken Maxwell-Jones, P Eismark, Paul Blake, J Hailey, Helen Leiser, William Gordan, Peter Gallagher, John Seaman, James Young, John King, Hugh Compton, Richard Bateson, Barbara Harvey, David List, John Martin, Scott Reeve, Peter Thorsheim, Pat Badger, Ken Otter, A Burdett, R King, Judith Farrington, Gillian Hughs, Betty Thomson, Norman Gunaratne, Mike Winstanley, Tom Tullock-Marshall, Sammy Tsang

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1	<b>Welcome</b> JJ welcomed the group to the meeting.	<b>Action</b>
2	<b>Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising</b>	
2.1	(2.5) JL reported that he had spoken to Andrew Payne, Head of Education, regarding the seating arrangements for school parties in the Public Canteen. He had agreed to monitor the reservations of tables in the restaurant by the Education team and ensure that the correct number of places are booked and that they are more specific about the timings of the reservations. It was asked which schools visited. JJ stated that it is a mix of local schools and other schools with a more diverse background or higher proportion of free school meals.	
2.2	(2.9) It was stated that the report on the recent fire drill would be published with these minutes ( <i>see separate document</i> ) and that Paul Davies (Head of Estates and Facilities) would attend a future Users Forum to respond to any questions regarding the report.	
2.3	(2.11) JL read out the following statement, received from Andrew	

Dyer, Information Management Consultant, in response to a request for information on the release of AIR 81 files:

'The MOD are currently planning how the review and transfer of AIR 81 might take place. There are some possible sensitivity issues which have to be addressed, mainly sensitive personal information, and MOD are currently looking into the extent of this. This preliminary work is anticipated to take a number of months. Following which, all being well, the first tranches of material could start to be reviewed and transferred. There is a huge volume of material to get through so while it's possible that the 1939 material might come through fairly soon after work begins, reviewing the entire batch is a multi-year project.

- 2.4 (4.1) DP had investigated why a particular document had taken over an hour to arrive; the document was meant to go to the map room but was initially delivered to the incorrect place. DP apologised for this mistake.
- 2.5 (4.2) The reader in question had spoken with Anna Buelow (Head of Preservation) after the meeting on the 18/06/09 to resolve the issue of inconsistent advice given regarding the handling of certain 18<sup>th</sup> Century Royal Naval documents.
- 2.6 (4.5) JL had spoken to Jane Ardizzone, Contracts Manager, about self clearing of the tables in the restaurant. She had agreed to feed this back to Yes Dining.
- 2.7 (4.4) It was asked if the minutes of the Special Users Forum of 07/05/09 could be discussed at the next forum. JJ agreed to this.

JJ

### **3 Paul Sturm (Update on Rules of the Reading Room)**

The new version of the Rules of the Reading Room is available on The National Archives website at:

[www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/rules.pdf](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/rules.pdf).

The changes are mainly to descriptions of roles and responsibilities and re wording of the existing rules for clarification.

In particular, the section on which items are allowed to be taken into the Reading Room has been clarified. Comments on the updated rules can be sent through the usual "your views" channels (via the boxes in the reading rooms or by email to [yourviews@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:yourviews@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk))

### **4 Unveiling of plaque to commemorate Prisoner of War camp**

Emma Markiewicz, Friends Manager invited representatives from the regular readers to an event organized by the Kew Society on 10<sup>th</sup> September. They will be unveiling a plaque at TNA to commemorate the Italian Prisoner of War camp that used to stand on the Kew site. The event will start at 17:30 with a reception at 19:00. This is an invitation only event, to get an invitation please get in contact with Emma at [e.markiewicz@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:e.markiewicz@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk)

## 5 Document Production Statistics

Dave Priest, Production Coordination Manager, asked the forum for their feedback on the document production figures, which are issued at each forum. It was agreed that the users would give their thoughts at the next forum on which of the statistics they feel are useful.

Q. Can new readers without a readers ticket make an advance order?

A. No, all advance orders for new readers are being withdrawn.

Q. What about readers that don't show on the date specified for their documents?

A. They can call us in advance and reserve the documents for a later date. If they don't, the documents will be returned to the repositories. Repeated 'no shows' will result in this service being withdrawn from the users in question.

## 6 Proposed changes to public services and operations at The National Archives- Jeff James

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/about/changes.htm?WT.ac=hp-proposed-changes>

6.1 JJ gave a brief background to the proposed changes to public services at The National Archives, which are in response to a necessity to reduce running costs by 10% by 2010, as a result of our budget remaining flat for the next three years.

6.2 The key points that will affect our visitors and customers are:

- Moving to opening five days a week – Tuesday to Saturday
- Reducing overall staff numbers by 35, mainly in administration and management roles, but increasing the number of senior records specialists
- Continuing to provide access to original documents on site at Kew
- Charging for car parking in line with the government's green agenda

6.3 Q. What is the real reason for The National Archives having to save 10%?

A. With the increase of costs, and not receiving more money year on year (flat cash), we have projected that we do not have enough money to pay our bills. This decision has been made by The National Archives rather than being imposed; we could have made a 3% saving each year but this would not allow for a strategic approach and it was decided that a proactive response to the situation would be less detrimental to both users and staff than a drawn out process.

6.4 Q. How is closing by one day going to save money?

ALL

A. There are currently approximately 250 public service staff in Advice and Records Knowledge, Document Services and Security departments. By closing one day a week we will save approximately £500k in staffing costs.

6.5 Q. What is happening to the staff structure behind the scenes, and what are the knock on effects?

A. We are required to consult the trade unions for a period of 30 days, so what we can say about that is limited. There has been some mis-information in the press and the suggestion that we are 'dumbing down' is not true. The proposed new structure actually sees an increase in specialist roles. We are de-layering the line-management structure which currently involves a number of people managing just one or two staff. This will mean we will have a flatter structure without losing important expertise. Unfortunately, this means that we have to go through a displacement process. Across the whole organisation, the number of staff will be reduced by approximately 35, mostly in management and administration roles.

6.6 Q. To what extent are these decisions fixed?

A. We cannot consult on the amount of savings that we need to make, as we have established that we need to save 10% over the next 3 years in order to continue to function effectively. The strategic direction of the organisation (for example the shift to online delivery) is the responsibility of the management board.

6.7 We have come up with a set of proposals after detailed consideration, which we feel allow us to make the necessary savings in line with our strategic priorities and with the least impact possible on our users. For example, we decided that closing on a Monday and continuing to open on Saturday would mean that those users who are unable to visit during the week are still able to access our services, even though we would save more money closing on a Saturday. We hope that through consulting with users on the details of the proposals we are able to further minimise the impact of the changes on our customers.

6.8 Q. Have you considered having another late closing during the week?

A. We will take this suggestion away and consider it.

6.9 Q. Could you extend document ordering times on the late closing days (Tuesdays and Thursdays)?

A. The reason why last document orders is currently at 4:45 is so that staff working in the repositories can return documents from 17:00- 19:00 (there is a limited number of staff at this time as most leave at 17:00). However we will consider this suggestion.

6.10 Q. Was there consultation regarding the redundancy?

A. Yes, there is a legal requirement for us to consult with the unions

for a period of 30 days. We are doing everything we can to avoid compulsory redundancy by opening voluntary redundancies. It is hoped that those staff in roles that are displaced (and do not wish to take voluntary redundancy) are found other jobs either within The National Archives or elsewhere in the civil service.

- 6.11 Q. Can anyone take voluntary redundancy?  
A. Anyone can apply. However the final decisions will depend on criteria such as the skills and knowledge required for the organisation to continue to function effectively.
- 6.12 Q. Will the CEO Natalie Ceeney be at one of the meetings?  
A. Yes, Natalie Ceeney will be attending the next User Forum on 20 August.
- 6.13 Q. With regard to fewer management roles, besides some departments' names being changed, why have there been a number of new departments created, such as Public Services Development?  
A. A number of these departments are very small and essentially have the same function and structure as they did when they sat within other departments. For example Public Service Development Unit (PSDU) used to sit within the Advice and Records Management Department (ARK). A decision was made to separate PSDU out as it has a different function to ARK, but its function and structure are essentially the same as before.
- 6.14 Q. Can we see a breakdown of savings by directorate?  
A. Yes (*please see separate document*)
- 6.15 Q: Do you consider digitisation sacrosanct?  
A. We believe it's important to The National Archives long term strategic objectives as a lot of our records are accessed online.
- 6.16 Q. Your Press Officer was quoted in the press as saying that TNA is looking for ways to save money by reducing opening hours and investing in online resources. Will the time come when all access to documents is online?  
A. She said more than that, but the media were selective in what they reported. We will always continue to provide on site public access to physical documents. Where we are able to enter in to a commercial partnership to get popular material digitised and made available online, it is cost effective to do so and results in the records becoming accessible to users across the world.
- 6.17 Q. Has the government instructed you to sell off the Kew site?  
A. We have no plans to sell the Kew site. The reality is that the Q1 site has challenges, such as meeting tough government targets on Co2 emissions. This will require significant money to be invested in order to continue to be viable. We are currently looking at these

issues as part of a longer term strategic review called TNA 2020.

- 6.18 Q. How often is the car park used? Can you remove the Island in the car park to create more space?  
A. The car park is full nearly everyday. We have not looked into removing the Island, however it is likely that there are practical reasons why these areas can not be parked on, such as mains services etc.
- 6.19 Q. With the burnt series (WO 363) the digital version does not show all the pages when compared to the microfilm version, why is this?  
A. There is a technical issue which means that the first page shown is always the attestation page, even though this is not necessarily the first page of the service record. However you can use the backward and forward arrows to browse the whole service record.
- 6.20 Q. How will the charging of car parking work?  
A. We are not 100% sure at this stage. We are currently looking at options and looking into the technical requirements. Feedback and suggestions are welcome.
- 6.21 Q. When will the accounts be published?  
A. Post meeting note: These have now been published in our annual report:  
<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/annualreport0809.pdf>  
The CEO, Natalie Ceeney will be at the next User Forum to answer questions on these and any other issues.

## **7 AIR 27 and improvements to the Catalogue- Jone Garmendia: Catalogue Manager**

- 7.1 Jone Garmendia gave a brief update on this important project, to improve the catalogue descriptions for this popular series of documents. Further information on this and other cataloguing projects can be found here:  
<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/about/operate/meetings/catboard/catprog.htm>
- 7.2 There was a question about the appendices for no. 500 Squadron which seemed to be missing. Staff have checked catalogue data and corrected a list conversion error that had remained unnoticed since the launch of the online catalogue in 2000. It was also asked if the AIR 27 documents are likely to be digitised. LO responded that this is unlikely as they contain photographs.

Please note that all minutes and presentations are available at our website at: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/events/readers.htm>

**The next meeting will be on Thursday the 20<sup>th</sup> of August in the Talks Room- All are welcome**