

**Title: The National Archives' User Forum**

**Date: 28 February 2019**

**Location: Talks Room**

**Attendees (Staff)**

Lee Oliver (LO) -Head of Venue Management and Services (chair)

Caroline Ottaway-Searle (COS) - Director of Public Engagement

David Priest (DP) -Document Production Coordination Manager

Tom Gregan (TG) - Head of Document Services

Kristen Dilworth (KD) PA to Caroline Ottaway-Searle (notes)

**Attendees (Users)**

Phil Lamb

John Seaman

Richard P. Bateson

Jeff Jefford

Chris Eley

Pauline Eismark

Jackie Speel

M W H Roberts

James C. Young

1. LO welcomed all to the meeting

2. Matters Arising - November meeting notes

2.1 Correction on item 5.5 – should read Advanced Orders not Advanced Search

2.2 Is there any update on 5.6?

LO will send a reminder to the team responsible

3. Departure of London FamilySearch Centre

3.1 LO explained that The London FamilySearch Centre will cease operations on Saturday 23 March 2019. LO stated that The National Archives has signed up to become a FamilySearch Affiliate Library and as a result there will be access to FamilySearch's digitised collection on TNA PC's from Tuesday 26 March.

3.2 LO noted that the following changes to the reading room would be made by the end of March:

- Number of TNA PC's unchanged
- Microfilms relocated
- New low shelving for library material
- Soft seating areas for reading/private study
- Informal lecture space for student groups

3.3 Can the microfilm readers be moved away from the window, as the natural light is an issue?

LO said that he would see what he could do to mitigate glare.

### 3.5 What expertise is left at The National Archives to deal with enquiries?

LO - we still have staff that are regarded as family history specialists or experts and our enquiries staff are being trained by London FamilySearch Centre staff on the most common enquiries they handle.

### 3.6 Why are FamilySearch leaving The National Archives?

LO – It is their decision; they were here much longer than originally intended. The agreement we have with them has reached its endpoint. They are not moving to another location, as they have moved to largely digital delivery of their resources.

## 4. The end of User Forum

4.1 COS stated that today is the last User Forum. COS explained that the decision has been made because the number of users attending has diminished significantly and at times there have been more staff than users at the meetings. There are still many ways to engage with TNA but people have voted with their feet.

4.2 It has been poorly advertised, most people were not aware of the meeting dates

LO – We have a bespoke email contact list of over 160 people; the information is on the website; and is advertised the same way as all the other events to over 250,000 recipients of our email newsletter.

4.3 LO – The User Advisory Group will continue and the delegates are happy to take on any feedback, their details are on our website, or contact us and we can pass it on.

4.4 Can there be an online equivalent to User Forum?

LO - There are online channels already, including our Facebook and Twitter pages.

## 5. Open discussion

5.1 Why aren't there more events on Saturday?

LO – This is an issue we have identified and the events team are looking at addressing this.

5.2 The CO253 documents are deteriorating badly some will become illegible.

LO – Please use the online form to tell us about the condition of any document.

5.3 DEFE 71 – files annotated missing at transfer, is this noted by TNA or MoD?

TG – It would be noted by the MOD Record Decision team, it usually means the files were not present to be transferred at the planned time of transfer.

5.8 The Kate Williams talk seemed expensive.

She is classed as a premium speaker, and we priced the tickets accordingly.